DAWN OVER SAMARKAND

REBIRTH OF CENTRAL ASIA

BY

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"One of two things : either we shall set in motion the deep rear of imperialism—the eastern colonial and semi-colonial countries, shall revolutionize them and thus hasten the fall of imperialism ; or we shall botch things here and thereby strengthen imperialism and weaken our movement. This is how matters stand.

"The point is that the entire Orient regards our Union as an experimental field. Either we correctly decide and practically apply the national question within the framework of this Union; either we establish really fraternal relations, real collaboration between the peoples within the framework of this Union—and then the entire Orient will see that in our federation it possesses a banner of liberation, a vanguard in whose footsteps it should walk, and this will be the beginning of the collapse of world imperialism. Or we, the entire federation, commit a mistake here, undermine the confidence of the formerly oppressed peoples in the proletariat of Russia, shear the Union of its power to attract the Orient which it now enjoys, in which event imperialism will gain and we shall lose.

"This constitutes the international significance of the national question."

—JOSEPH STALIN, *Report on the National Question, delivered at the XII Congress of the Russian Communist Party, 1923.*

INTRODUCTION

No clouds! In a clear sky I see
The sun. No night to dim bright day!
No Czar! Our soil's forever free!
Well done, O Bolshevik!

You crushed the Khans, you did not spare
The age-long foe of tribes oppressed.
The victory the poor will share.
Well done, O Bolshevik!

Of all I've heard and seen I sing,
For now my blind eyes see anew....
I see, I feel the joy you bring—
Well done, O Bolshevik!

—KAR-MOLLI
(*A blind seventy-year-old Turkoman bard*)

BOKHARA, Samarkand, Dushambe, what romantic associations are evoked by the mere mention of these names! Down a yellow shimmering road a long line of conquerors —Alexander the Great, Genghis Khan, Tamerlane—and countless peoples and tribes move in endless caravans through the centuries, lured by the "pleasure domes" and "gardens bright" of Samarkand the Ancient and Noble Bokhara.... Incense-bearing trees, vineyards, pomegranates, pistachios, cotton fields, bazaars, camels, rugs, silks, harems....against a background of deep blue, gleaming towers of particolored mosques, turbaned mullahs reciting the sacred verses of the Koran, veiled maidens swaying gently to the weird monotone of an old chant....

Alluring echoes, these, of a romanticized, idealized past —an Occidental's literary reveries.

I recall our trip to Varsobstroy, the new hydroelectric station that was being built in the remote land of the Tadjiks,

at the foot of the Pamir. We were a literary brigade: Egon Erwin Kisch, the Austrian journalist; Paul Vaillant-Couturier, the French revolutionary writer; Luyn, a Norwegian writer; Bruno Jasiensky, the Polish novelist and poet; Anna Abramovna Berzina, the Russian writer, and Louis Lozowick, American artist. Our cars rattled up the narrow, rocky road that wound along the precipice overhanging the wild Dushambe. The mountains on both sides of the river were bare rocks, torn by deep gorges, red with the heat of the sun. Far in the distance loomed the snowy peak of Lenin-tau.

There was not a living being in sight, except for a rare native in bright cloak and silk embroidered skull-cap, prodding his long stick into the ribs of his obstreperous *ishak* (native ass), or an occasional eagle wheeling in the sky.

The country was primitive. Only here and there one saw traces of civilization: now a green patch of cultivated land rising on a steep incline—a triumph of human persistence and ingenuity; now an ethereally woven bridge arching perilously over the roaring Dushambe.

But those things had been there for centuries. Alexander the Great, during his famous passage to India, must have contemplated them as rude signs of a primitive life.

The ebullient Frenchman at my side, undaunted by the scorching heat and clouds of dust, grew eloquent over the rough grandeur of the scene: "Chaos....primordial chaos....*magnifique!*...."

"Never mind chaos...." grumbled Khodzhaiev, a young Tadjik, a member of the State Planning Commission of Tadjikistan. "We are beginning to harness this chaos. There has been chaos here long enough."

It was always so! Invariably those Central Asian Bolsheviks would put a damper on our innocent enthusiasms. Small wonder. They had dwelt there for centuries, in ignorance, in darkness, isolated from the rest of the world, oppressed by the Czars, exploited by the native rulers, the Emirs, the Khans, the Beys, and the all-powerful and

fanatical Mohammedan clergy. One could scarcely blame them for being impatient with the magnificence of chaos and for finding romance "in this telegraph line we have put up here at the cost of infinite pain, in this road which we are building and which is to serve as an artery beating with the pulse of a modern Stalinabad joined to a modernized Samarkand and Tashkent."

"This is our romance," insisted Khodzhaiev. "Bolshevik tempo, comrade, Bolshevik tempo!" And after a pause: "If you ever write about Tadjikistan, please don't fall into the error of most of the Europeans who visit us, don't descend to exoticism, don't become worked up over the magnificence of chaos." Khodzhaiev pronounced "magnificence of chaos" with irony. "Please don't expatiate on the beauty of our apparel, the quaintness of our villages, the mystery hidden beneath our women's *paranjas*, the charm of sitting on rugs under shady plane trees and listening to the sweet monotone of our bards, of drinking green tea from a *piala*—and eating *pilaf* with our hands. Really, there is little that is charming about all that. Take any cultured Central Asian, cultured in a modern sense, that is, and to him most of the local customs mean simply backwardness, ignorance of the most elementary rules of sanitation and prophylactics."

We felt that Khodzhaiev was annihilating a half—the best half, we thought—of our prospective books on Central Asia. We hastened to defend ourselves, attempting to assuage him by diplomacy, reminding him jocularly that if we ever wrote anything about Central Asia, it would be not for Uzebeks and Tadjiks, but for Europeans and Americans, and that a touch of the exotic might make our books more palatable to the West.

"But that would be pandering," Khodzahiev argued indignantly. "You would not be describing Soviet Central Asia. If your reader is interested in exoticism let him read books about us written ten or twenty or fifty or a hundred years ago—it would all be the same. But you are in Soviet Asia, and it is your duty to give what is most characteristic,

what distinguishes our Soviet Republics. You must deal with the living, not the dead."

Khodzahiev was, of course, right. He was speaking of a modern romance, a contemporary epic—the rebirth of Central Asia. And that romance, he felt, demanded not rhetoric but arithmetic, not exclamation marks but figures.

Central Asia is in a paroxysm of change. The immemorial droning of the somnolent East is drowned out by the strains of the *Internationale* mingled with the sirens of new factories and the hum of American and Soviet motors. Among the traditional *paranjas* of the veiled women there are appearing in ever-increasing numbers the bobbed hair and the khaki uniforms of the revolutionary youth. Mullahs and beys have been supplanted by Soviet commissars and Red factory managers. Mosques and *mederesse* (religious academies) are being crowded out by Communist Universities, workers' clubs, people's theatres, libraries, movies. An anciently entrenched oriental feudalism is being shattered by the vast sweep of modernity, by industrialization, electricity, collectivization, science.

For years now Central Asia has been a medley of clashing values. The revolution has unleashed a whirlwind of passion. The old fights back, desperately, brutally. But the new is triumphantly advancing. Even those who cling to the old cannot resist the magnificent upsurge of the new. History has executed a sudden *volte face*: the West is carrying its civilization back to its place of origin. Western revolutionary scientific ideas have been hurled against eastern tradition with unparalleled daring, and the emotional overtones of this collision of two world systems are surely the most dramatic aspects of the epoch-making advance of Bolshevism in the Orient.

Yes, a storm is raging over Asia. The heart of the old continent is on fire. From Moscow the revolutionary flames have raced across the burning steppes of Turkmenia and enveloped the Asiatic extremities of the old empire. And the end is not yet. Beyond Khiva, Bokhara and Samarkand, beyond Turkmanistan, Uzbekistan, Tadjikistan, these rising

outposts of Bolshevik influence in the East, there are the teeming colonial and semi-colonial peoples of Asia—Persia, Afghanistan, Mongolia, India, China....

Central Asia has become a source of infinite wonderment to the peoples of the Orient, including the Central Asians themselves. It is significant that within the last few years the Karategin, Darvaz, and Pamir mountain Tadjiks have evolved the so-called "songs of wonderment," a new genre of folk poetry. Each of these new songs expresses the bard's thrill of amazement at first beholding the achievements of the new Socialist Soviet Republics.

Thus, to take only one example, the Tadjik bard Munavvar-Sho, for instance, is ineffably impressed by what he saw in the capital. His song begins with an enumeration of all kinds of possible and impossible wonders that he had once seen or heard or remembered—"soot and ashes in the caverns of the moon," "a kingdom bathed eternally in the lunar quiet of the night," a "multitudinous bazaar where the silence is never broken," the men of Darvaz who when they caress their lovely damsels find "eternity too short and a second much too long...." However, Munavvar-Sho has visited the new city of Stalinabad, the capital of Tadjikistan, and has grown much wiser. He now speaks contemptuously of all those wonders he once believed. He dismisses them as triffling, mere "fables." The one thing he now *really knows,* the one *really* great wonder is the city of Stalinabad where he saw "a great, big square with clubs and cars and cinemas and factories and lights."

News spreads fast in Central Asia. Mountains, deserts, rivers and national boundaries present no serious obstacle. Everything spectacular happening in Soviet Asia is immediately known in all the surrounding colonial and semi-colonial lands. In remote Khonkanyor, for instance, the whole village—men, women and children—had gone out to meet the first tractor shipped from the center. When they saw that the tractor could not be brought down the very steep hill, they decided to carry the machine down in their arms. For weeks the tractor driver was the most respected

man in the village. On the other side of the border Afghans sat day and night and watched the tractor working.

And at Sarai Komar, the center for the development of Egyptian cotton in Tadjikistan, I saw a delegation of Afghans who came from across the Pianj to ask the local Soviet authorities to help them organize a collective farm.

"But you are not Soviet citizens," protested the Tadjik official. "Your country is Afghanistan. We can't come there and organize collective farms."

"Why not?" asked the naive Afghans. "You have a strong army."

The thing appeared quite simple to the applicants—come with your army and organize collective farms.

"It's a long and very complicated story—why not," dodged the official. "But why not get together your belongings and come to us? We'll organize you in a kolkhoz all right. We'll settle you on good land, and give you credits. Remember we can use here another million and a half willing workers. Just go back and think it over."

Disappointed, the Afghans left. I do not know whether those particular Afghans ever came back. But I do know of a few collective farms in Tadjikistan organized by Afghan immigrants. I have also met a number of Afghans in one of the brick factories in Stalinabad, the new Tadjik capital.

Great Britain is filled with foreboding. Japan is rattling the sword. Hyashi says Japan will not brook Soviet influence in Sinkiang or the rest of China. The United States is wavering, loath to see Japan gobble up China and loath to see Soviet influence spreading in the Orient. Of late it has begun to lean more to the side of Japan. Asia is in a great ferment. One little spark may set off an explosion powerful enough to shatter to bits the whole elaborate world structure of modern imperialist-capitalist civilization. And it is as likely as not that that spark may be generated around Uzbekistan or Tadjikistan, the two young Soviet Republics which have risen out of the ashes of ancient Bokhara in the very heart of Asia.

PART ONE

OLD AND NEW—IMPRESSIONS

Ленин, "Искра"

"....The revolution would not have triumphed in Russia, and Kolchak and Denikin would not have been crushed, if the Russian proletariat did not have on its side the sympathies and the support of the oppressed peoples in the former Russian empire. But to win the sympathies and the support of these peoples, it had first of all to break the chain forged by Russian imperialism and free these peoples from the yoke of national oppression. Without this it would have been impossible firmly to establish the Soviet power, to implant true internationalism and to create the remarkable organization for the collaboration of nations which is called the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and which is the living prototype of the future union of nations in a single world economic system."

—JOSEPH STALIN, *The National Question.*

XII

A BOLSHEVIK IN STALINABAD

Who has brought to our steppes the gay, ringing streams?
Who has tamed the wild waters of the turbulent Pianj?
Who has brought our poor peasant sweet joy and sweet rest?
The men from the North! The men of great freedom!
The men of Marx and Lenin—the Bolsheviks!

—ALI-BE, Turkoman Poet.

Structures and Superstructures

I SHALL never forget the powerful impression made on me by Sluchak, the assistant to the native vice-president of the Tadjik Republic. I lived in his hastily built, sparsely furnished apartment for over two weeks and I had an excellent opportunity to observe this wiry, energetic, blue-eyed and dark-skinned Bolshevik at close range.

The apartment gave one the feeling of military headquarters. Except for the time that my host spent in the office, his home, from early morning till late in the night, was crowded with people—officials with portfolios and batches of papers, engineers with blue-prints and grandiose plans, accountants and economists with endless columns of figures and ingeniously plotted graphs and curves, managers of state farms, chairmen of collective farms, representatives from cooperatives, the transport, labor unions, educational institutions—callers without end.

Not infrequently the callers would begin to pour in even

before Sluchak was dressed. And heated business discussions would resound through the half-empty rooms while Vice-Chairman of the People's Council of Commissars brushed his teeth, gargled his throat, and pulled on his breeches. A meal was never a meal in this household; it was "snatching a bite" in the midst of some conference. It was so in the evening, too. Always working, always on the go, always in the thick of a "campaign."

The first time I met him, I did not catch his name. I did not know his official position. The conversation turned to the then unfolding "cultural campaign." Sluchak spoke so enthusiastically about the victories on the Tadjik cultural front that I was certain he was a native. My astonishment was great when I discovered that he was a Jew from Gomel. This was strange enough. But even stranger were his enthusiasm and complete identification with his subject. He actually spoke of "our" culture, when he meant Tadjik culture.

Apparently my companions were surprised too, for one of them remarked: "The way you spoke, I surely thought you were a Tadjik." "Not a Tadjik, but a Bolshevik," corrected Sluchak. In Tadjikistan, he proceeded to explain, the Soviet task of overtaking and surpassing the capitalist countries—a task common to all the republics in the Soviet Union—was particularly difficult because of the great cultural backwardness of the population. The government, therefore, had the additional and immediately urgent task of removing, in the briefest possible time, the cultural and economic inequality between the Tadjik people and the peoples of the other republics in the Union. This meant that the rate of development of Tadjikistan's national economy and, *primarily*, of its social and cultural life, had to be much greater than in the rest of the Union, so that this backward country might catch up with her sister republics and together with them overtake and surpass the capitalist countries. Accordingly, Sluchak assured us that it was not as a Jew or a Russian or a Tadjik that he spoke, but as a Bolshevik—a Bolshevik who realized that "a victory on any

of the Soviet Union's cultural fronts was a victory for Bolshevism."

When Sluchak's use of the word "primarily" was challenged by some of my Communist companions, his answer was illuminating.

"The precedence I have given to cultural over material advance must, of course, be understood in the sense of my having placed the end anterior to the means. The end is a nobler and richer life, a happier humanity. The means are a thorough and complete change in the material, the economic base of the social structure. My use of the word 'primarily' was, strictly speaking, wrong. However, there is some psychological explanation. Subconsciously, perhaps, I stressed the aim first because in my own life, and I suspect it holds true of most of our comrades, the constant awareness of the aim has served as incentive and justification during the most crucial periods."

Here Sluchak walked over to the bookshelf and pulled out a well-thumbed paper-covered collection of Communist Party Resolutions. He swiftly turned the pages, glanced through a couple of them, and obviously finding something to support his argument, smiled mischievously:

"You, comrades, are finding fault with my formulation. Now listen to the Resolution of the Twelfth Congress of the Russian Communist Party, passed in 1923. Here it is, on the National Question, Section One. I'll read only part of it:

> "The legal national equality achieved by the October Revolution is a great gain for the peoples, but it alone does not solve the whole national problem. A number of republics and peoples, which have not passed, or have only to a small extent passed, through the stage of capitalism, which have no proletariat or only a very small proletariat, and which, accordingly, are economically and culturally backward, are not in a position to make full use of the rights and opportunities conferred upon them by national equality and are unable to rise to a higher level of development and thus overtake the more advanced nations, without effective and prolonged outside help. The causes of this

actual inequality lie not only in the history of these nations, but also in the policy of the Czarist government and of the Russian bourgeoisie, whose endeavour it was to transform the outlying provinces exclusively into sources of raw material exploited by the industrially developed central regions. It is impossible to abolish this inequality and eradicate this heritage in a short period, in one or two years. The Tenth Congress of our Party noted that 'the abolition of actual national inequality is a long process demanding an obstinate and persistent struggle against all survivals of national oppression and national slavery.' But abolished it must be. And it can be abolished only by the Russian proletariat rendering effective and prolonged assistance to the backward nations of the Union in their economic and cultural advancement. This assistance must consist primarily in the adoption of a number of practical measures for the creation of industrial centers in the republics of the nationalities which were formerly subjected to oppression, and in drawing the greatest possible number of the local population into this work. Finally, as indicated by the resolution of the Tenth Congress, this assistance must proceed side by side with the struggle of the laboring masses for the consolidation of their social positions as against the exploiting elements, both native and from outside. Unless this is done no hopes can be entertained of establishing proper and stable cooperation between the nations within a single federative state. Hence, the second immediate duty of our Party is to struggle for the abolition of the actual inequality of nationalities and for raising the cultural and economic level of the backward nations.

"Here you have it—'cultural and economic.' In the concluding sentence 'cultural' is mentioned first. Not the means but the end," said Sluchak triumphantly. Seeing, however, that his foreign comrades felt a little sheepish, he hastened to console them by pointing out that in their actual practice, even as the Resolution showed, the Bolsheviks placed chief emphasis on the means.

This is Leninist practice. The Bolsheviks hold that the cultural and psychological aspects of life are "superstructures," that there is no such thing as "immutable human nature," and they are out to change the economic and social foundations of society in the conviction that they will thus

Kyiaku

bring about corresponding changes in the psychological and cultural superstructures. As regards cultural innovations, they employ strategy, leveling their first, direct and most powerful attacks at the determining, *i.e.* the economic, factors. But the Bolsheviks are not crude materialists. They are Marxists. They look at life dialectically. Their conception of social "structures" and "superstructures" is monistic: there is no rigid line of demarcation—the sap of life runs up and down; there is an eternal give and take. In the social complex, they realize, psychological and cultural patterns, though determined by economic patterns, in turn affect those patterns. This being the case, it is obvious that the Bolsheviks could not ignore, even from the very outset, psychology and culture. Their efforts on these fronts have been persistent. In a tense revolutionary situation, they have found, clearness and firmness of purpose, tempered by intelligence, caution, elasticity, and above all genuine sympathy are absolute prerequisites for any effective changes, especially on the cultural front. Besides vested interests to combat, there were native prejudices to be taken into account —traditions, customs, habits, faiths, superstitions, and fears.

Naturally, some things required less delicate treatment than others. It all depended on the ease with which the government could demonstrate to the masses the advantages and desirability of a specific change, and that depended on the depth of the prevailing prejudices against such change. On the whole it is safe to say that in their work the Bolsheviks had to be exceedingly subtle and diplomatic. This was particularly true in Central Asia, and especially in Tadjikistan, where equilibrium, when established, was rendered highly unstable by the proximity of vigilant English imperialism and by tireless anti-Communist propaganda.

National in Form, Socialist in Content

In our conversations with Sluchak, we would often revert back to the problem of culture, especially national culture:

Once one of my companions expressed amusement over the grotesque forms which Bolshevism has assumed in some of the remoter regions of Central Asia—Communists going to the mosque, members of the Party clinging to all kinds of superstitions which harked back to pre-Moslem days, to magic and Shamanism.

"This does not worry us," Sluchak assured him. "Our first test in these backward regions is this: Is the fellow with us in the matter of taking away the lands from the beys, is he with us in the matter of collectivization and industrialization, is he ready to fight for our program? If he is, he is eligible for Party membership. Don't you see? We must be flexible in approaching the masses. We have the responsibility of reconstructing a whole society, and we cannot permit ourselves the comfort of sectarianism. Here acceptance of Marxist and Leninist materialist ideas is not a prerequisite for Party membership, but it invariably happens that a few months in the Party result in a gradual acceptance of our ideas. When a native is drawn into the Party, he is much more amenable to our influence and teaching. We are in a transition period. Naturally, you encounter some grotesque specimens."

Another time, Sluchak and I had a long discussion as to the wisdom of Bolshevik emphasis on the development of national cultures. My feeling was that such emphasis was bound to lead to greater cultural differentiation, to a lessening of mutual understanding, increased friction and disunity. I confessed that I was quite irritated in the Ukraine when all theatres, moving pictures, signs in the shops, and business and offices employed the Ukrainian language. There was a time when one could go to Kiev or to Kharkov or to Odessa and feel that one was in a Russian city. Indeed, the cultured Ukrainians used the Russian language almost exclusively. And writers like Gogol, Dahl, Korolenko—Ukrainians all—contributed to the enrichment of literature by employing Russian, a language spoken by many more millions than was the Ukrainian

Amazing!

language. Now Russian has become a foreign tongue in the Ukraine!

"If you were a Russian, we would call you a Great Russian chauvinist and we would make it rather hot for you," Sluchak laughed.

Following good Bolshevik precedent, however, I tried to defend my position by a reference to Lenin. Long before the Revolution, in his polemics with the Jewish *Bund*, Lenin declared that national culture was a bourgeois concept and that socialism, together with abolishing national oppression, would remove all national barriers and that the interests of all nationalities would combine in a single whole.

"But this is a mechanical interpretation of what Lenin said," exclaimed Sluchak. "You take no cognizance of time or place. Furthermore your arguments have been excellently answered by Stalin." Jumping up impetuously and pulling out the second volume of Stalin's *Leninism*, Sluchak pointed out the passage where the Communist leader, after defining Great-Russian chauvinism as "the desire to ignore national differences in language, culture, mode of life.... the desire to prepare for the liquidation of the national republics and regions....the desire to undermine the principle of national equality," proceeds to castigate those "deviators" who "take their stand on the argument that, as with the victory of socialism nations will fuse into a single whole, while their national language will be fused into a single common tongue, the time has come to liquidate national differences and renounce the policy of developing the national culture of the peoples which were formerly oppressed."

There it was, black on white. My arguments, stamped as "the most subtle and, therefore, the most dangerous form of Great-Russian nationalism"!

"Read on, read on," urged Sluchak. "Stalin also answers your reference to Lenin very specifically."

I read: "In the first place, Lenin never said that national differences must disappear and national tongues be fused in one common tongue within the boundaries of a *single*

state, *before* the *victory* of socialism *all over the world*. Lenin, on the contrary, said quite the opposite, namely, that 'the national and state *distinctions* between peoples and countries . . . will exist for *a very long time even after* the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat on a world *scale*.' How can people refer to Lenin and forget this basic statement of his?"

"Don't you see," Sluchak further pressed his point, "we communists do not discuss 'national culture' in the abstract. For us this is a concrete problem in a concrete situation. And we have to deal with it concretely. In order to have a Soviet Union at all, in order to gain and hold the sympathy of all the peoples that had been oppressed by czarism, in order to make them love and understand the Soviet Union, it was essential that we make the Soviet government not a Russian but an international government. We, of course, are interested in socialism and not in national differences. But we realize that the ultimate fusion of nationalities under socialism is a matter of very many years and that the road to that fusion is through the complete liberation of all peoples. We must reach the native masses, the peasants, the workers, and the only way we can reach them is through their own national language, the only language they know, and their own national cultures, the only cultures for which they have a genuine love. Accordingly, not only the schools, but all our institutions and organs, both Party and Soviet, have had to become naturalized step by step. They have had to employ the language understood by the masses and take into consideration the habits and customs of each given people. Only such a policy has enabled the Soviet government to function not as a Russian but as an international government understood by, and near and dear to, the toiling masses of all the republics, particularly to the nations which have been economically and culturally backward!"

My Norwegian companion, Luyn, now took up the argument with Sluchak. While admitting that the Bolshevik cultural policy was wise and necessary as an initial step in the creation of the Soviet Union, he still failed to see how

the perpetuation of that policy would bring about the ultimate fusion of peoples under socialism.

In reply to Luyn, Sluchak gently chided his foreign comrades for soaring in the realm of the superstructures without occasionally alighting on the economic and social foundations.

Had not feudal economic and social relations in Europe created a specific feudal culture which even then transcended national lines? And had not capitalist economic and social relations created a quite distinct bourgeois culture? Indeed the proverbial visitor from Mars would find infinitely more similarities in the cultures of, say, Italy, Germany, Finland, Japan, and other capitalist countries than he would find differences. This, despite the constant incitements of national and religious suspicions and hatreds. Now what was the situation in the Soviet Union? argued Sluchak. Here the economic foundations of society in all the nationalities were basically changed. Exploitation, the profit motive, private property in the means of production were being rapidly eliminated. The socialist proletariat and the industrialized and collectivized peasantry, which was ideologically coming closer and closer to the proletariat, were in power among all the Soviet peoples. The Soviet Union was already creating a classless society, and it was advancing towards the economic and cultural equality of all the peoples in its fold. Was it unreasonable to believe then that the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics would in the course of time evolve a socialist culture quite distinct from the feudal or bourgeois ones? Look at Stalinabad! Of course, old forms did tend to persist, but already a new content was being poured into them. This was a part of the transition. Hence, so many cultural hybrids in the land. With a socialist economy assured, with all causes for national hatred, jealousies and suspicion removed, with travel made infinitely easier and encouraged, with internationalism constantly implanted in the psychology of every Soviet child, what reason was there to believe that in time a fusion of peoples would not be effected?

Yeah. Why not?

But this would take a very long time. It would come about gradually, naturally, not through administrative pressure. All the Bolsheviks could do was to create the conditions which would make this normal development possible.

Meanwhile, suggested Sluchak, the Soviet course during the transition period, the proletarian dictatorship, had been very fully worked out in Stalin's *The Political Tasks of the University of the Peoples of the East*:

> But what is national culture? How are we to make national culture compatible with proletarian culture? . . . How are we to reconcile the development of national culture, the development of schools and courses in the native languages, and the training of Communist cadres from among the local people, with the building of proletarian culture? Is this not an impenetrable contradiction? Of course not! We are now building proletarian culture. That is absolutely true. But it is also true that proletarian culture, which is socialist in content, is assuming different forms and different means of expression among the various peoples who have been drawn into the work of socialist construction, according to their languages, their local customs, and so forth. Proletarian in content and national in form—such is the human culture toward which socialism is marching. Proletarian culture does not cancel national culture, but gives it content. On the other hand, national culture does not cancel proletarian culture, but gives it form. The slogan of "national culture" was a bourgeois slogan so long as the bourgeoisie was in power and the consolidation of nations proceeded under the aegis of the bourgeois system. The slogan of "national culture" became a proletarian slogan when the proletariat came into power and the consolidation of nations began to proceed under the aegis of the Soviet power.

In Happy Exile

Once, as we sat over a glass of native wine, Sluchak looked so nervous and worn that some one in our group suggested that it would not be a bad idea if he took a vacation.

His eyes lit up: "A vacation! I haven't had a vacation for years! If I ever get one, the first thing I'll do is fly to Moscow—theatres, music, and all that sort of thing. And next I would go to Minsk to see my mother. I haven't seen her for over eight years now, and I am anxious to see her. Poor woman, after my father was killed in the Gomel pogrom, she did everything to bring us up as good Jews. And how grieved she was to see me, a student of the Talmud, intended for the Rabbinate, become a revolutionist, a *goy*. When I joined the Bolsheviks she cried bitterly, though she said nothing—I had always suspected that her opposition was caused more by her fear for my life than by actual dislike of the Revolution. After all, a Jewess whose husband had been killed in a pogrom was not likely to cherish tender feelings for the czar and his regime. My sister writes me that the old woman is now quite reconciled to the new life. In her relations with God she has remained steadfast. She goes to synagogue regularly, keeps *kosher* house, observes all the fasts and holidays; but politically she has become quite a Bolshevik."

Sluchak laughed with a tenderness one scarcely suspected in him. What a mighty thing is Revolution! How it had hammered and hardened this obviously sensitive being into the sharp, steel-like instrument of the proletarian dictatorship he now was. In the smithy of the Revolution, this child of the ghetto, this student of the Talmud intended for the Rabbinate, had been forged into a Bolshevik, a military hero, into a torch-bearer of Communist Internationalism on the borders of Afghanistan, India, and China.

When Sluchak was asked how he happened to land in that remote periphery of the Soviet territory in Asia, he answered with a long disquisition on the manner in which the Bolsheviks organized the government of Tadjikistan, and on Tadjikistan's early need of cultured non-Russian Bolsheviks to aid in the work. Only toward the end did he mention himself and how he happened to be in Tadjikistan. He was here, because he was a Bolshevik representing a national minority and as such more able to appreciate

A strange, proto-communism

the problems and aspirations of other national minorities. He had fought three years in the Civil War; during the famine he worked in the Volga region; then he was shifted from one job into another, in White Russia, the Caucasus, and finally in Moscow. But in Moscow he remained only a short time. Just as he had begun to take things a little easier, to permit himself an occasional evening in the theater or the opera, the Party ordered him to Tadjikistan.

Sluchak had scarcely heard of Tadjikistan before. He knew it only as a wild and primitive country of mountains, deserts, bandits, and nomads, somewhere near India. And how he hated to leave Moscow, the center of everything in the Union, and go to some forsaken place in Central Asia! He felt hurt and resentful. Tadjikistan meant exile to him. But orders were orders. He came here and plunged straight into the work, into the very thick of it. At first he worked furiously, simply to forget his resentment, but the deeper he became involved in the work, the more absorbing, the more fascinating he found it. This was his third year here, and now nothing could tempt him to leave Tadjikistan except on a short vacation. "If one wants to work, to build," said Sluchak, "Tadjikistan is the place. If one wants to fight—Tadjikistan affords ample opportunity for that, too. Even now, in 1931, we have our hands full with Ibrahim Bek and his Basmach bands. What makes this place so alluring is that the struggle here is extraordinarily intense—extraordinary even in the Soviet Union. You have done well to come here. Geography, history, religion, customs—everything seems to have conspired to make this obscure place the ideal spot for any one who wishes to study Bolshevism both as an international force and a domestic generator of highly charged economic, political, and social drama. First, we are at the gates of Hindustan, Afghanistan, China, countries with considerable Tadjik populations. Second, we have to deal with the most fanatical Moslems in the world. Third, it is an inaccessible mountainous country—tucked away in the Hissar and Kuliab valleys and hidden among the Zeravshan, Altai and Pamir

mountain ranges—and native counter-revolutionary bands supported and armed from the outside have an excellent opportunity to harass us constantly. Fourth, we have here an involved national question, and particularly and quite naturally a tendency toward Tadjik chauvinism. Fifth, Tadjikistan was an incredibly ignorant and impoverished country. Only one half of one per cent of the population was literate. And you can gauge the effect of the revolution and the Basmach movement on the life of the people by the fact that at the end of the Civil War Eastern Bokhara had lost 72 per cent of the sown area, over 60 per cent of the cattle, and 25 per cent of the population. There was a great exodus of the more prosperous peasant families. Two hundred and six thousand people (43,000 peasant households) with stocks and cattle and implements migrated to Afghanistan. We found here a completely devastated country, and we have been striving to transform it in as brief a time as possible, and despite all the Ibrahim Beks, into a highly mechanized, collectivized, and industrialized center of Egyptian cotton."

Ibrahim Bek Again!

Sluchak's frequent references to Ibrahim Bek provoked a series of questions from the group. Sluchak dismissed the whole affair as rather inconsequential, a brief but unpleasant interlude in the republic's march toward collectivization and cotton. According to him, minor Basmach raids from across the Afghan border had occurred here regularly since the formation of the Tadjik government. Ibrahim Bek was still the most important Basmach leader. His following among the thousands of kulaks and beys who had emigrated to Afghanistan after the Revolution was so great that he had begun to play quite a role in intertribal Afghan struggles, lending his forces and prestige to this or that Afghan chieftain. By the time Amannula Khan, the Afghan king, was overthrown and Nadir Khan seized the reins of

the Afghan government, Ibrahim felt sufficiently powerful to oppose the new king. There were rumors that Great Britain was backing Ibrahim Bek, intending to utilize him in the creation of a buffer zone between Soviet Tadjikistan and Afghanistan. The zone was to be settled by Ibrahim's followers, and he himself was to be the ruler of Britain's choice.

However, Ibrahim Bek was defeated by Nadir Khan and was forced to retreat to the north, where for three and a half months he had complete sway over the Karategin and Badakhshan provinces. But he could not withstand the pressure of Nadir Khan's troops. Early in April, 1931, a fierce battle on the banks of the River Pianj left Ibrahim Bek's forces completely smashed. When his warriors and their families and cattle tried to cross the Pianj to the Soviet side, they were attacked by the Afghans in the middle of the river. Hundreds more were massacred. Women and children and cattle were drowned. Those who managed to cross were received by the Soviet authorities with serious misgivings.

The misgivings were wholly justified. Beaten in Afghanistan, Ibrahim Bek had conceived the notion of restoring his fortunes by invading Soviet Tadjikistan which was in the throes of the collectivization campaign. Ibrahim relied on reports of peasant opposition to collectivization, and he had hoped that the invasion of Soviet territory by a large force might provide the impetus for a widespread counter-revolutionary uprising. Like most people in Tadjikistan, Sluchak was inclined to credit Great Britain with the plan. He maintained, and I subsequently heard many other people in Tadjikistan say the same thing, that the ostensibly peaceful reimmigration of 6,000 people on the 25th of March, 1931, had been a maneuver of Ibrahim's to create a strong anti-Soviet base for himself on Soviet territory, especially in his native Lokai Valley.

Soon after the coming of the 6,000, a long proclamation, printed on good paper, and decorated with Ibrahim Bek's seal, began to circulate in the villages of Central Asia.

The proclamation, displayed to us by Sluchak, had been issued "In the name of Almighty God." It opened with a verse from the Koran, "With God's help, victory draws nigh." It read:

> To all the peoples inhabiting the territory of Russia, Turkestan, Tartarstan, Kazakstan, Kirghizstan, Uzbekistan, and Tadjikistan, greetings from Divon Bek and Tachasm Bachi, Mohammed Bek, also from his Majesty Emir Alim Khan!
>
> We herewith recall to your mind that at the time the Russian Czar Nicholas and Emir Alim Khan were reigning, all nations lived happily and peacefully on their respective territories and were allowed freely to practice their religion. But in the year 1295 Czar Nicholas, and in the year 1298 Emir Alim Khan were removed from their thrones, violently, at the instigation of Lenin (his name be cursed)....

Ibrahim accused the "representatives of the government of Lenin, cursed be his name" of breaking their promise to rule "fairly and justly." He presented a long bill of complaints: The Bolsheviks were dishonoring the Moslem women and turning them into harlots; they were taking the lands and the water from the rightful owners, forcing the poor peasants to plant cotton instead of corn, thus spreading hunger and devastation through the land. They were foisting new-fangled iron instruments and machines ("bought in foreign lands"!) on the peasants, for which the peasants had to pay with their last kopeks; taxes were crushing and were being collected by force. The bazaars were ruined, prices were sky-high, and the "poor peasants can obtain goods only by submitting to insults and injuries." The Bolsheviks were deceiving the peasants by forcing them into collective farms and depriving them of their horses and cattle. Besides seizing their property, the Bolsheviks were planning to exile the peasants "to far-away lands." That was not all. The "treacherous and horrible," the "satanic" government would soon begin to destroy mosques and prayer houses and sacred books, to burn the dead, to take the women away from their "masters" and force them into the Communist Party and make harlots of them. Before

long any one daring to even so much as breathe the name of God would be mercilessly destroyed.

Ibrahim's proclamation also announced his international connections:

> As these things were developing through the criminal policy of the Bolsheviks, the meeting held February 8, 1928, by the League of Nations in Berlin [sic!], where a representative of the refugees from Russian Turkestan was present, as well as the session of the League of Nations held in December 1929 participated in by representatives from America, France, Japan, Germany, Persia, Turkey, Italy, Afghanistan and Poland [the name of England is discreetly omitted], resolved, in accordance with the statements of the representatives of the emigrants from Russian Turkestan, and with the new political information furnished in the year 1930 by Comrades Trotsky and Zinoviev, to abolish the Party's government in Russia as well as in Bokhara, and to organize instead a monarchy.

"Empowered" by his Highness Emir Alim Khan and by the above-mentioned nations "to raise armies of the required strength on all borders," Ibrahim urged the peasants of Central Asia to advance upon Soviet Bokhara and "invite in writing the whole Red Army, the whole militia, all the workers' fighting detachments, and all of the Emir's subjects" to join in the war against the Reds. After promising "in the name of Allah and his prophet. . . . to pardon all those who served the Bolsheviks, but who had repented in time," Ibrahim's declaration concluded: "Our aim is clear. Oppressed peasants, we are engaged in this war to liberate you from the Bolshevik yoke!"

"The trouble with Ibrahim Bek," Sluchak commented, "is that he does not know Soviet Tadjikistan, the mood of the Tadjik masses. He is an able leader and no fool. But, like most emigres even better informed than he, Ibrahim tends to believe what he wishes to believe. Of course, the proclamation was not written by him. It must have been written by one of him mullahs, but it no doubt expressed his ideas. Ibrahim and his gang thought that they could undo what we have done, that they could return the past. They sought to take advantage of our difficulties during the reconstruction period. Backed by the English, they thought that they could upset our spring sowing campaign and that with the support of the dissatisfied elements in the villages—the kulaks and the mullahs—they could start a counter-revolution here. Well, they knok better now. We have beaten them to a frazzle. Ibrahim Bek has not been caught yet, but we know where he is and we'll get him, too."

A Bolshevik Legend

To show the utter fatuousness of Ibrahim's adventure, Sluchak began to cite the great achievements of Soviet Tadjikistan. "Study Dushambe and Stalinabad," he urged, "and then make your trip through the country and you will see what the Soviet government has accomplished here. But as you study, always bear in mind that we have started here with less than zero."

What Sluchak said was no idle boast. Before the revolution there had been no industries in Tadjikistan. In 1931, Tadjikistan had nine cotton-ginning mills, one cotton-seed oil factory, one volatile oil factory, numerous flour mills, a huge factory specially employed in preparing fruit for export, etc.

There was in 1931 the beginning of a mining industry—coal, oil, and salt. The production of Shurab oil had been doubled in 1930, and was expected to be trebled in 1931, and oil transportation had been facilitated by the new sixty-five kilometer railroad branch to Shurab. Scientific commissions were studying the Karamazar zinc mines and the Nauket copper mines. The first was expected ultimately to yield ten thousand tons of zinc and the second five thousand tons of copper yearly. The exploitation of Khanakin anthracite had begun. A huge hydro-electrical station was being constructed on the river Varsob near Stalinabad. The most gigantic undertaking was the Vakhshstroy, the analogue of

the Ukrainian Dnieprostroy, which was planned to supply most of the country with electrical power and with the basis for a modern system of irrigation. Thirty thousand people had already been drawn into the domestic crafts industries, of which the silk industry was the most important and most promising. In addition to the silk factory employing one thousand people, which was already working in Khodjent, one of the biggest silk factories in the Union, which was to employ three thousand Khodjent women, was approaching completion. Another huge silk factory was being built in Stalinabad. In 1927-28, the government had put 2,68,000 rubles into its industries; in 1928-29, 14,00,000 rubles; in 1930, over 1,00,00,000 rubles; in 1931 the figure was 1,40,00,000 rubles. In 1928-29 the value of Tadjikistan's manufactured products was 1,00,00,000 rubles; in 1931, 5,10,00,000 rubles. In 1928-29 the value of Tadjikistan's agricultural products was 9,40,00,000 rubles; in 1931, 15, 30,00,000. In 1928-29 building operations amounted to 2,00,00,000; in 1931 the allotted sum was 12,80,00,000.

Great progress had also been made in agriculture. As had been pointed out by Sluchak, in 1925 the sown area was 72 per cent lower than in pre-war days. This spelled catastrophe. All kinds of wild rumors spread through the countryside. Soviet enemies went around whispering that Tadjikistan would never recover under the Soviet power, that God had inflicted hunger upon the people for accepting the *"Bolshevois,"* that unless they continued to struggle against the Communist regime the whole population would die out. A few years passed and the sown area was greater than in pre-war days. And what was particularly important was the rapid extension of industrial crops. The growing of cotton, which had almost ceased before 1925, developed to tremendous proportions—from thirty-five thousand hectares in 1914, the growing area had fallen to four thousand in 1925. In 1930 the total area had increased to one hundred and thirty-two thousand. The year 1931 showed a further 25 per cent increase in the cotton area of Tadjikistan.

The growth of the cotton area here depended a great deal

on irrigation. In 1929 Tadjikistan spent three million rubles in round figures on irrigation; in 1930, twelve million rubles, and the budget for 1931 was sixty-one million; *i.e.* approximately fifty rubles for every inhabitant in Tadjikistan. And most of that money was obtained not from taxing the local population but from sums granted by the central government of the Soviet Union.

In the matter of collectivization, the intensive educational and propaganda campaign brought altogether unexpected results. By May 1931 sixty thousand out of a total of two hundred and twenty thousand farms were in collectives. And by June over sixty per cent of the cotton lands were collectivized. The percentage of all collectivized lands (cotton and grain) was about thirty per cent. No mean achievement this, when one considers the backwardness of the country, the newness of the Soviet regime there, and the bitter struggle against collectivization carried on by the combined forces of reaction under the leadership of Ibrahim Bek.

"Of course," Sluchak said, "there are plenty of difficulties, but we overcome them—advancing along the general line laid down by our Party, fighting simultaneously the opportunists, the doubters, the creepers, and the chauvinists on the Right, and the infantile, over-enthusiastic babblers on the Left. Whatever aspect of the work you tackle, industrialization, collectivization, education, woman's emancipation, cooperation, transport, the problems of religion, law, administration, the building of Stalinabad, everything is full of thrills and romance.

"Even to me the mere fact that Tadjikistan, an obscure little country the size of Czecho-Slovakia, is one of the seven sovereign constituent Republics of the Soviet Union, enjoying a political status on a par with the infinitely larger and incomparably more important economically R. S. F. S. R., still seems a legend, a myth! Imagine what it means to the natives!"

XIII

DUSHAMBE VERSUS STALINABAD

Both Samarkand and Kandagar I saw,
And the dream of the desert and the bazaar
I saw,
And one-third of the Mohammedan world I saw,
And the snows of the tall Pamir I saw.

Canals I dug, and molded pottery,
And carried burdens up the mountain's back.
Along steep paths I stumbled days and days
And reached the mountain's rocky peak....

But never such a wonder have I seen
As the iron road to Dushambe....
—Tadjik Song of Wonderment.

Donkeys—Camels—Mullahs—Merchants

IN the morning sun the Dushambe Bazaar shimmers like a vari-colored Oriental carpet. From the winding streets and alleys, raising clouds of gray dust, streams of bearded natives—peasants, peddlers, craftsmen—riding graceful mountain horses or tiny native asses, pour leisurely into the teeming square. Now and then the fantastic curves of a loaded camel undulate gently above the crowd. The older Tadjiks and Uzbeks are dressed in their brightest cloaks and headgear. Occasionally the snow-white turban of a mullah flutters in the air. Everywhere one sees sallow fakirs shambling behind their donkeys heavily laden with bundles of dry brush or sacks of grain or baskets of fruits and berries.

The merchants, the more solid ones, those who won places

in the double row of stands, are spreading their wares—the cheapest sorts of gaudy Bokhara silks and skull caps and calicoes and carpets, beads, hand-made stilettos, pins, needles, threads, combs, moldy pastries and little tin jars with all kinds of miracle-working salves and potions. Most of the merchants, however, have no stands and they spread out their wares on the ground. One has leather and leather-goods, shoes especially adapted to mountain climbing, over-shoes, wallets, trinkets. Another crouches near a heap of *nas*, a green tobacco which the natives always keep in their mouths, and tobacco containers made of gourds. Still another has a pile of *uriuk*—small and very sweet apricots—or cherries—it being as yet too early in the season for the pomegranates, melons and grapes for which this part of the world is so famous.

Noise, shouting, laughter. Bargaining.

For the most part under the open skies, but occasionally under a huge umbrella, are spread out the tonsorial establishments. Barbers are hovering over their kneeling victims, scraping dull razors over resignedly lowered pates. Knife grinders are displaying their dexterity. Water carriers, their sweating, long-nozzled copper vessels or dark dripping water skins on their shoulders, are proclaiming the cooling properties of their wares.

In the center of this milling crowd, sits a mountain Tadjik, the proud vendor of two huge chunks of ice which he had hauled down from that glacier that looms in the distance. It was a difficult task to carry the ice from the steep height down the narrow and slippery mountain paths, but it was worth the pains, for ice in this torrid land is rare and precious, and, judging by the number of purchasers, quite irresistible.

A coffee-colored lad is trying to find space for his business. There is a log not yet preempted. He makes a dash for it, and, dragging a suspicious-looking cut of mutton from his sack, sticks his knife into it and begins to yell at the top of his voice: "Gusht—Gu-usht!" But a dignified graybeard, holding a heaping basket of apricots in his arms, chases

away the lad and usurps the place. How slow and deliberate the old man is, with what concentration he balances his tiny scales, carefully, carefully, as if these were not apricots but gold ingots, and he looks up into the eyes of the customer and seems to say: "Well, well, young fellow, I wonder if your intentions are really serious?" A few paces away a tall, barefooted youngster in a greasy old cloak is selling fritters, still steaming. The densest crowd has beleaguered the stand belonging to the Tadjik State Cooperative. Everybody is hungry for manufactured products sold at the low government prices. All the money of the bazaar ultimately finds its way into the cash box of the Cooperative. As the sun comes nearer to its zenith, the hubbub increases. A heavy, sticky smell, a mixture of the sweat of human bodies, of animals, and of shashlik, penetrates the cloud of fine dust which hangs motionlessly over the bazaar.

I step into a Red Chai-khanah and order a pot of Kok-choi—green tea. It is wonderful how refreshing hot tea is in these arid regions. During my journey through Uzbekistan I used to gulp down from thirty to forty *pialas* a day. An eternal Central Asian cycle—one is hot, then he drinks hot tea, then perspiration breaks out all over his body, then the perspiration quickly evaporates, then he feels cool; before long, however, he feels hot again, then again hot tea, again perspiration, again evaporation, again cooling, and so ad infinitum!

When I reach the third stage of the cycle, I drop into lazy meditation.

Suddenly, I am startled by a burst of martial music from the other side of the bazaar. The fellow in charge of the establishment is amused. "A parade. We are celebrating our victory over the Basmachi," he reassures me.

I rush out of the Chai-Khannah. As the head of the parade approaches, the whole crowd on the square splashes to one side, like water in a tilted vessel. The OGPU band is playing the Budionny march. It is followed by ranks of native and Russian Red Army men, Pioneers with red bow ties, young Communists in semi-military khaki uniforms, by

older Communists, workers, peasants, members of unions and cooperatives, all carrying banners and streamers and slogans in the Arabian and Latin alphabets—"Down with the Basmachi!" "Long Live the Cotton Campaign!" "Death to Ibrahim Bek!" "Long Live Socialist Collectivist Tadjikistan!"—all marching in the direction of the new city.

Bargaining is at once terminated, and the whole crowd, on foot, on horseback, on camels, on donkeys, men, women, children, merchants, peasants, mullahs, fakirs, form an amorphous, heaving mass, milling around and trailing behind the paraders.

By a kind of miracle, the churning mass of beasts and men flowing out of the large space of the bazaar is sucked into the narrow winding gullets of ancient Dushambe to issue again, an hour later, and much augmented, onto the wide paved streets and the broad sidewalks of Stalinabad. Two motor buses, fifteen motor trucks and eight passenger cars join in the parade, and by wildly tooting their horns add to the already unbearable noise. The parade halts before the imposing house of the Soviets. They are calling for Gusainov, the Secretary of the Central Committee of the Party, for Maxum, the President of the Republic, for Khodzhibaiev, the Chairman of the Soviet of People's Commissars.

"Death to Ibrahim Bek!" "Long Live the Cotton Campaign!" "Long Live Socialist Tadjikistan!"

No Mosques, No Churches, No Synogogues

Stalinabad is young. It is the youngest city in the youngest country in the world.

Stalinabad is the tempestuous capital of the seventh member of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics. Its foundations were laid in 1926 adjacent to the ancient village of Dushambe, in a broad valley where the Varzob river bids farewell to the snow-capped Hissar Mountains and plunges headlong into the Kafirnigan. Stalinabad is young. And the

turbulent Varzob, youthfully leaping and laughing, supplies the *leit-motif* to the bold chant which Red Stalinabad sings to the peoples of the East—sirens of factories, rasping of cranes, chattering of pneumatic hammers, panting of engines....

One need not be a primitive Tadjik mountaineer to break out into a "song of wonderment" on seeing Stalinabad. It started with nothing—no population, no materials, no skilled workers, about three hundred kilometers from the nearest railway, Basmachi lurking in the surrounding mountains.

True, there was the village of Dushambe. For centuries the fame of the Dushambe fair, held on a memorable Monday once a year, had resounded through these regions. Caravans heavy-laden with goods from lands as remote as Persia and China wound their way for months through the deserts and across the mountains of Central Asia to be on time at the Dushambe fair. But the Emir's rule and years of revolution, civil war and banditry brought ruin on the old village. And in 1925, when the Autonomous Tadjik Republic was born, there was practically no Dushambe. The village was deserted, the population gone....

In Dushambe one can still see a cluster of tumble-down, insect-ridden mud huts which the natives jestingly call "The Kremlin." That was the first seat of the Tadjik government. Here they met, here they lived, here they worked. When the heat became unbearable, the Executive Committee of the Soviet would retire to the yard, there, under an ancient tree, by the side of the malodorous Hauz, to attend to the affairs of state.

It was a Gargantuan task—the building of Stalinabad. Timber had to be brought from the north, from the Urals, *via* Termez. And the thousands of kilometers between the Urals and Termez, despite the inefficiency of the single track line, were much easier to negotiate than the three hundred kilometers from Termez to Stalinabad. One camel could pull only two logs. By the time a camel reached Stalinabad, each log was about one meter shorter than at the beginning

of the journey—the result of one end being dragged for ten days or so over stones, gravel, and sand!

It was difficult to lure skilled builders from Russia. The four-or five-day journey by railroad from Central Russia to Termez through the arid, sandy steppes was bad enough. But then one had to go by cart from twelve to fifteen days, or on a donkey—a matter of twenty-five days!

It took three years to extend the railroad line from Termez to Stalinabad. The first train arrived at the capital on May 1, 1929. And now, in addition to the railroad, there is a regular air service connecting the Tadjik capital with Termez, Bokhara, Tashkent, and Moscow, and another air line connecting it with the Garm grain region.

Day and night, day and night dozens of motor trucks, hundreds of wagons, *arbas*, carts, and camels haul building materials to the city. Houses spring up by magic—cottages of unburned and burned brick, houses of stone and cement. The site of the city is cluttered with stacks of brick, with piles of lumber, with mountains of stone, gravel, cement. The streets are ripped open—pits, holes, ditches, swamps.

People live in barns, in hastily rigged-up barracks and arbors, in tents, in covered wagons. A more or less stabilized, normal life is out of the question. The population is swelling. Every train disgorges into the city hundreds of new workers. Food is irregular and bad. The water system develops too slowly to meet the growing demands.

Still the outlines of a modern industrial city are visible. Stalinabad is beginning to look its part—the capital of a progressive land. The stately building of the Executive Committee had been erected back in 1926-1927. It was the first European edifice in the heart of Asia, at the foot of the Pamir. It was built literally under the bullets of the Basmachi. Two buildings away is the magnificent home of the People's Commissariat of Justice—a befitting monument to the sixty Communists who had been slain and buried on that spot by the Basmachi. Since 1929, Stalinabad has been growing at a prodigious rate, one official building after another: Post and Telegraph, the Red Army Club, the

Commissariat of Education, the Hospital, the Tropical Institute, Tadjikstroy, Khlebstroy, the Municipal Soviet Building, the State Publishing House, various schools and dormitories, an electric power station, an electric flour mill, a huge electric bakery, a silk factory, a state theater, a cinema laboratory, a railroad station, a railroad depot, a modern restaurant, and, of course, many standard houses accommodating thousands of soviet workers and employees. Stalinabad is illumined by electricity. It boasts a radio broadcasting system, a beautifully kept park, and a well-equipped airdrome. In 1930 the population was sixty thousand, and the city is still growing, spreading, expanding. Within a few years Stalinabad is projected to become one of the important industrial centers in the Soviet Union.

Incidentally, one distinction of Stalinabad the Tadjik Communists never omit to mention—Stalinabad is the first, and so far, the only capital city in the world free of any religious institutions. No mosques, no churches, no synagogues. This in the dark depths of Asia!

Stalinabad Press—Self-criticism

The two local papers, in addition to the inevitable *cotton* and *collectivization* subjects, bristle with self-criticism, with exposes of inefficiency, laxness, dishonesty on the part of organizations and officials. Inadequate sanitation and food provoke the bitterest comments from the worker correspondents.

The inhabitants of the workers' settlement on the outskirts of Stalinabad complain. For two weeks a dead camel has been spreading such a terrific stench in the neighborhood that one can neither pass the street nor open a window without becoming sick at the stomach. Repeated appeals to the militia (police) have brought no results. The item in the newspaper concludes with two despairing questions: "How long does the militia intend to let the rotting camel poison our lives? How long will the inhabitants of the settlement continue to be treated as the step-children of Stalinabad?"

A few months later the residents of the same suburban settlement register another complaint in the press. They write:

> Remoteness from the bazaar, from shops and the cooperative stores, the absence of a restaurant, of a water system, of street illumination, a bath, not to mention our unsatisfied demands for a club, a cinema, a library, etc., make life in the suburb rather unenviable. Last year the Consumers' Cooperative did attempt to do something for us. It had opened three stands in our suburb, selling manufactured products, vegetables, and meats. The remoteness from the center let itself be felt forthwith—near each stand there was a permanent long line. Still, though the service was not commensurate with the needs, the opening of the stands removed the necessity of daily journeys to the bazaar or of buying from private traders. Alas, this did not last long. One fine morning the meat stand vanished, then, shortly after, the vegetable stand. Now we cannoot even get bread in our neighborhood. Apparently the Party's order that the cooperative stores be brought closer to the consumers has not yet reached the bureaucrats in our cooperative organizations.

The worker *Dust-Mamät* complains that "the conditions of the workers in the brick factory are exceedingly bad. They are not even supplied with a sufficient number of cots. Many sleep on the floor. The dormitories are filthy. There is no cleaning woman. The dining room doesn't function well. It is about two or three months since the workers have received any manufactured goods—clothes, shoes, etc. No production conference has been called for over two months. The workers work blindly, not knowing either the plans, achievements or failures of the factory. The administrative and technical staffs offer no leadership. The Workers' Committee, too, is asleep, making not the slightest effort to remedy in the situation."

Here are a few characteristically bitter headlines: "Restaurant or Pigsty?" "Vegetables Are Perishing, but the

Cooperative Sleeps." "Height of Vegetable Season, but Workers not Supplied." "Who Ate Up the Potatoes?" "No One is Ready to Receive the Vegetables." "Cooperators Sleep, While Private Trade Prospers." "Fit for Pigs." "Drinking Mineral Water Expensive Vice." "Worms a Delicacy." "Restaurant Manager Inefficient."

And the August 31st issue of the *Tadjikistan Communist*, the official Government and Party organ, has the following streamer running across the entire width (8 columns) of the page:

A GOOD AND CHEAP DINNER HELPS OUR INDUSTRIAL AND FINANCIAL PLAN

This is followed by a quotation from a decree issued by the Central Committee of the Party:

> Every worker, every Party member, every Young Communist, and above all, every person employed in organizations directly connected with Communal Feeding must actively struggle against the defects in our communal feeding, and must endeavor so to improve it as to render it one of the most important links in improving the life of the working class.

There are different ways of interpreting such items in the press. The skeptic is likely to find in them substantiation for his skepticism. To one who knows Soviet conditions, however, they are likely to bring unadulterated delight. Here is a young city in the heart of the impenetrable mountains and deserts of darkest Asia, striving towards forms of social life so advanced as to be inconceivable in our western, capitalistic civilization. Failures? Naturally. Absurdities? Inevitably. Abuses? Galore! But after all, these negative items have been selected from a batch of papers covering a period of five months. I said "negative." But to one who understands the situation they may not appear quite so negative. Do they not reveal an extraordinarily active participation of the masses in the molding of their own life? Do they not reveal an unusual willingness of the authorities

to listen to the voice of the people? For, it should be noted, any such complaint sent to the Soviet papers, whether published or not, is immediately followed by an investigation, and by an invariable improvement.

In the very same issue which contains the complaint of the "step-children" of Stalinabad (Nov. 21, 1931), the reader may also find the interesting daily feature: "Our Replies." To quote:

> "To Tkachev—The statements contained in your note 'Are Such Facts Permissible?' are now being investigated."
>
> "To Krivoshein—Your material is being investigated."
>
> "To Dokshin—Your revelations are a duplication of an expose already published in the paper. There is therefore no point in publishing your note."
>
> "To Zatziepin—Your note concerning Protosov's unauthorized appropriation of electrical wire from the store-house has been substantiated. Protosov was tried by his co-workers and was ordered suspended from the union for a period of six months and removed from his job at the storehouse. The court also decided to issue a public reprimand to the manager of the storehouse, Medvediev, for his failure to keep careful inventory of the materials in his custody."

In the same column featuring "Our Replies," under the conspicuously set caption, "Better Children's Lunches and Cooperatives Needed," the following startling paragraphs appear:

> "The hot lunches served to the children in our schools are of poor quality. This must be attended to immediately. Considerable improvement can be achieved at relatively low cost.
>
> "Also, the Commissariat of Education, together with the Cooperative Organization, must forthwith begin to organize children's cooperatives in the schools. After a sufficient number of children have been persuaded to join these cooperatives, low price stands and buffets must be opened in all the schools. This measure is important both from the standpoint of health as well as education."

Hundreds of thousands of black and white children of

unemployed American workers might well envy the enlightened solicitude which the "uncivilized" Asiatics of Stalinabad bestow upon their young!

For Sanitation! For Education!

It is by such measures, by such exposes, that conditions are gradually being improved, not only in Stalinabad but in the whole country. Consider sanitation and education. Up until very recently, and partly even now, the *tabibs*, the local healers, played the chief role in the care of the sick. The health of the country was in their hands. Swallowing little pieces of paper with quotations from the Koran was considered the most efficacious remedy against the disease. Wearing amulets was the sole prophylactic the natives ever knew. As regards preventive health and sanitation measures, the densest ignorance prevailed. Malaria was the most frightful scourge in Tadjikistan; there are still regions where fifty per cent of the population are affected by malaria. There is leprosy here, and dysentery, and a hundred other local diseases that take an incredibly large toll of the ignorant population.

It is only recently that Soviet medicine has made its appearance in Tadjikistan. Up to 1929, there was only one dispensary. In 1931, there were sixty-one hospitals—ten in the cities and fifty-one small hospitals in the villages. There are now 2,125 beds to accommodate the sick, where before there was none, there are thirty-seven dental clinics, where before there was none. There are special concentration villages for the victims of leprosy, where before lepers were allowed to mingle with the rest of the population, the only restriction being that they were required to walk in the middle of the street. There are two hundred medical doctors in Tadjikistan who are gradually effecting a revolution in the health habits of the natives. One of the best naturopathic hospitals in the Soviet Union is now located in Hodjent. Moreover, the young Tadjik Republic can already boast of

four medical research institutes. And while in 1929 the Tadjik Government spent only 7,25,000 rubles for health purposes, the expenditures for 1931 leaped to 68,98,000 rubles. However, even this sum was trifling considering the needs. Stalinabad has a long way still to go before it can be considered a healthful sanitary city. And it is all up to the Stalinabad Press.

The greatest strides made by the Tadjik Republic have been in the field of education. Nowhere in the Soviet Union have I observed such an overpowering thirst for knowledge as that evinced by the young Tadjiks. The few old Moslem schools, where for years children were made to study the Koran by heart, and where no secular subjects of any kind were tolerated, have passed into oblivion. Gone, too, is the old type of teacher—the mullah or the student of the Moslem religious academies. The schools are modern schools; the subjects and modern subjects; and the teachers are modern teachers. A people that was almost entirely illiterate (only ½% could read and write) suddenly woke up to the need of education! Schools are being built everywhere. And it is noteworthy that for the most part the initiative comes from the peasants themselves.

One of the thrills during my trip through the country was to see a group of peasants in a remote mountain village waylay the President, Maxum, and denounce him and the government for being dilatory in providing building materials. "No nails, no window panes, no lumber—and the summer is passing, the school season about to start. It's a disgrace!" argued the peasants. And not until the President took down all the details and promised to attend to the complaint personally did the peasants evince a willingness to discuss other matters.

The papers are full of discussions of the school problem, and persistent demands for schools. A mere glance at the headlines of the *Tadjikistan Communist* is sufficient to give one some idea of the situation. The paper is impatient. It clamors for schools. One headline screams: "Building Organization Disrupts School Construction." The subhead

reads: "Immediate Acceleration of Tempo. The Plan Must Be Carried Out. We shall Brook No Delay."

I quote a few characteristic paragraphs from the article that follows these headlines:

> One hundred and two new elementary schools, eight kindergartens, several pedagogical technicums, a number of schools for the workers' children at Santo and Shurab, five libraries and reading rooms, five red tea rooms—this has been our plan for the coming school season, this, we have hoped, would serve as a basis for the unfolding of our vast cultural and pedagogical work, in conformity with the general plan for a cultural aevolution in the various districts of our Republic.
>
> The turbulent economic and industrial growth of Tadjikistan, the unheard-of rate of development of our socialized sector, have stimulated the toilers' legitimate craving for education.
>
> What was sufficient yesterday, is utterly inadequate to-day. Everywhere there is a shortage of schools. We cannot accommodate all those who wish to study. The existing schools are crowded, and therefore not very efficient. The slogan "Liquidate Illiteracy Within the Next Couple of Years" has been taken up by the masses and is being carried into life.
>
> Naturally, school construction does not keep up with the rapidly growing demand. During the coming season, the lack of school building will greatly hamper any attempt to liquidate the illiteracy of tens of thousands of toilers.
>
> This is the reason our building organization must give special attention and care to the construction of the schools and the other cultural mass institutions projected and financed by the People's Commissariat for Education.
>
> This is the reason, with a deep feeling of protest and indignation, we are forced to call attention to the threatening failure on the most important front of school construction.

The four other school items are all written in the same vein. Protest, indignation, irony, but no despair. The schools projected for the years 1931-32 would be constructed, despite some natural delay. For delay is natural—bringing lumber and nails and glass from the north and distributing them among the villages is no simple matter, in view of the inadequacy of the transport. Another cause for delay is the time required for the training of teachers.

Still, a great deal has been accomplished. In 1925 there were only six modern schools in Tadjikistan. Toward the end of 1926 there were 113 schools with 2,300 students; in 1929—500; in 1931, over 2,000 educational institutions with over 1,20,000 students! The budget for 1929-30 was 8 million rubles. The budget for 1930-31 was 28 million rubles.

"These tempi, as you see, are colossal," said Khodzhibaiev to me, "but the results are insufferably small. There is a disproportion between the economic and cultural growths in Tadjikistan. What I mean to say by that is that in the realm of economics our achievements are much greater than in the realm of culture."

To me it seems, however, that Khodzhibaiev was wrong. He was too impatient. Furthermore, his criteria were not the correct criteria. Altogether a cultural revolution is not a ponderable matter. Certainly, the number of schools (this is what Khodzhibaiev judged by) is in some way an index of what has been accomplished, but to me this is not quite as significant an index as the overwhelming number of people who are clamoring for schools, for modern education, for science! This is the real achievement. Schools will come, once the demand has been created.

It is very characteristic that during the Basmach troubles, the village teacher was usually the first to be killed by the invading bands. The teacher stands for modernity, for science, for the emancipation of the enslaved Moslem woman, for collectivization, for cotton, for everything abhorrent to the supporters of the old. The village teacher in Central Asia is the worst enemy of reaction and bigotry; the best and most enthusiastic carrier of the Communist ideals. The village teacher is a symbol of an awakened Tadjikistan forging ahead to heights no Tadjik could even dream of six or seven years ago.

XV

NEW WOMEN IN OLD ASIA

If you throw a stone into a deep well,
It will go to the bottom, O mother dear.
If you sell your young daughter to strangers,
She will cry her eyes out, she will perish,
O mother dear....

Along the road that takes me from my home,
Sow thorny weeds and thistles, O mother dear.
And when you see the thistles droop their heads,
You'll know that I have faded out of life,
O mother dear.
Pre-Revolutionary Turkoman Girl's Song.

Gray or Dark-blue Coffins

TO a Westerner traveling in the Orient, one of the most haunting experiences is, no doubt, his first encounter with those strangely amorphous, ghost-like creatures that glide, silent and mysterious, through the narrow-winding, deserted alleys of any Central-Asian town or village. The experience is even more ghastly if one chances upon such a figure while it is at rest—a gray or dark-blue coffin standing stiffly on end, covered with a black, bulging, heavy lid.

These are the women of Central Asia, vestiges of a remote past, living corpses eternally imprisoned in their coffins. It is difficult to imagine anything quite so monstrous and degrading as this traditional costume (*paranja*), this formless cloak with its long, wide, empty sleeves tied on the

back, and its thick, black, horse-hair net suspended in front of the face, from the top of the head to a little below the waist. This is how the local Moslem, still untouched by Communist teaching, protects his woman from the impure glances of the stranger. The woman can see the world, but the world cannot see her. Even little girls of nine or ten are thus protected from immodest appraisals of their pulchritude. This custom is rigid, absolute. The emotional ramparts built around it by vested economic interest and religion are well-nigh insurmountable. Despite Bolshevik onslaughts, they have held out in the more inaccessible regions and even in such cities as Tashkent and Samarkand.

It is almost impossible to snap a photograph of a native woman. The slightest suspicious move in her direction and she flees as if pursued by a thousand devils. More than once our cavalcade, on espying women working in the fields, would begin to focus cameras, only to have the women drop precipitously to the ground and cover themselves with whatever they could lay hands on. Not before they heard the clatter of our horses' hoofs die away in the distance would they venture to peep out from under their covers.

Besides being offensive to the eye, the *paranja* is irritating to the nose. It always emanates a faint odor of perspiration mingled with that of mutton. Generally, it is filthy and insect-ridden, and is the cause of multifarious eye and skin diseases. It shuts from the woman and her suckling babe the benefits of sunshine and fresh air, and is accountable, in large measure, for the prevalence of lung-trouble among the women and for the frequent stunted growth of children.

What makes the *paranja* especially significant is that it serves as a symbol of the utter degradation and humiliation of the Moslem woman in Central Asia. "Obedience and silence are a woman's greatest virtues," says the Prophet. "If a Moslem is in need of good counsel," the Uzbeks say, "let him turn to his sire; if there is no sire, let him ask his older brother, or uncle, or neighbour; if there is no one of these about, let him consult his wife—and do exactly the opposite of what she says." Contempt for the woman

seems to be one of the most sacred articles of a Central Asian's faith.

Boys are a blessing in a home; girls a curse. When too many girls are born into a family, it is the mother who is held responsible. (Childlessness and infant mortality are also blamed on the mother.) To congratulate a father on the birth of a daughter is a mortal insult and many entail a bitter family feud. I knew a woman in Tashkent, Mozol Kolontarov, who had given birth to six girls in succession. Mozol felt terribly guilty before her husband. After an interval of seven years, she had another opportunity to redeem herself. Frantic with fear and misgiving, she kept on reiterating that she would much rather die than have another girl. Fate was unkind to her; she bore a girl once more. When she beheld the newly born infant, Mozol died of grief.

According to both the common law code (*adat*) and the religious code (*sheriat*), a woman may be bought and sold and transferred from one man to another without herself being in any way consulted. According to the *sheriat,* the husband has a right to punish his wife's disobedience by keeping her incarcerated in the house and by discreet use of corporal punishment. Cruelty, torture, and even maiming are not sufficient grounds for divorce. According to the old law, the testimony of one man is equivalent to that of two women. The woman is rarely permitted to leave her home without a male escort. While at home, she is confined to the *ichkari*—woman's section of the house—where she remains whenever her husband entertains visitors in the man's section. In the street, a woman dare not stop, or cough, or linger, or look back; she must just keep on walking. Polygamy, child marriage, and purchase of brides (*kalym*) are all essential features of woman's status in Central Asia. She is a chattel, a slave.

Yet there is evidence—often cited by the emancipated Tadjiks and Uzbeks—that the woman had not always occupied such an abject place in the social scheme of these peoples. Numerous legends and myths preserved by some

Tadjik mountain tribes make mention of heroic women and of brave and wise female rulers. There is the story of Queen Tamiris, of how she and her nomadic subjects had won a mighty victory over the great Persian ruler Cyrus. There is the memory of Queen Khatun, the wise ruler of Bokhara, who reigned during the troublous years of the early Arab invasions of Central Asia.

It was, indeed, with the coming of the Arabs and the gradual triumph of Islam that the position of the woman among the Iranian aborigines of what is now known as Tadjikistan began to decline, less rapidly among the nomads in the steppes and the peasants in the mountains, where the woman was an important economic factor in the family organization; more rapidly among the settled urban population—merchants, mullahs, officials, etc.—where the woman was economically unimportant and where the influence of the Mohammedan religion had taken firmer root.

This process continued during and after the Tiurko-Mongolian invasion. However, originally, that is before they surrendered to Moslem influences, the Tiurko-Mongolian nomads, too, had known of no special disabilities for women. Like the Aryan folklore, Tiurkish folklore has references to heroic women. There is the legend, for example, of a detachment of female warriors who had fought a valiant battle on the walls of Geok-Teppe. Also there is the beautiful Tiurkish legend about the woman musician Khelai-Bakhshi who had triumphed over all her male rivals, especially the celebrated musician Ker-Jepali who had challenged her to a contest. Khelai-Bakhshi was with child then. Her labor pains were about to begin. But she accepted the challenge of Ker-Jepali. The unusual contest lasted a long time. When midnight came, Khelai-Bakhshi turned to her husband, asking him what he preferred, a child or victory. "Victory," said the husband unhesitatingly. Then Khelai-Bakhshi excused herself for a little while. She gave birth to her child, handed it over to her relatives, and came back to proceed with the contest. She beat the old and famous Ker-Jepali, and he rode away with lowered head.

Green Frogs and Free Women

It was toward evening, after our customary visits to the schools, cooperative, the orphanage, the primitive silk works, and the other interesting places in the village, that our group, while lounging on the huge woolen rug and pile of blankets spread out under the magnificent plane tree on the side of a pool and sipping interminably the inevitable tea from capacious *pialas,* induced our hostess, the organizer of the local Woman's Department, to tell us a little of her life. Prompted and guided by our questions, occasionally interrupted and put back on the right track, Khoziat Markulanova told us her story.

She was born in Fergana. Her father was a weaver, a devout Moslem. Her mother was of peasant stock. From her earliest childhood, Khoziat, her two sisters and her mother were working at embroidering skull caps. Her two brothers were bakers. Hers was an industrious, hard-working family.

When Khoziat was eight years old, her mother made her a little *paranja.* Khoziat cried and refused to put it on. But her mother said that she was too pretty and that if she didn't go covered the Bek's procurers would grab her. Khoziat did not know what that meant, but she had heard so many stories of how little girls died in the Bek's palace that she was glad to put on the *paranja.*

When Khoziat reached the age of fourteen, her mother began to be worried. Most of her daughter's former friends were already married. Marriage now began to be discussed in Khoziat's presence. Once, her father, looking very pleased, marched into the *ichkari* and whispered something to her mother. Khoziat did not know what he said, but she had a feeling that it was about marriage. Her heart sank, as she was terribly afraid of being given to an old man. Pretending to be busy with the dishes, she strained to make out what was being said. She heard her mother ask: "Have they anything?" and her father answer: "Not rich, but they have something." Her mother nodded assent.

What happened was this: The village *imaum* and Ali Nazarov had come to feel out the old Markulanov as to what his attitude might be with regard to a match between his daughter and Nazarov's nephew. Upon receiving a tentatively favorable reply, the suitor's older sister, together with a woman neighbor, came to interview Khoziat's mother. They brought the traditional bread and a couple of kerchiefs as presents.

On the third day, the *imaum* and Ali Nazarov paid Markulanov another visit. Now the kalym—the price—had to be discussed. After arduous haggling on both sides, it was finally agreed that her father was to receive two rams, 160 pounds of rice, one cow—to compensate for the milk Khoziat had been fed—two donkey-loads of fuel, and three quilts. The cow was never delivered.

After that Khoziat's mother sent some more gifts to the suitor who neither she nor her daughter had ever seen. Three weeks passed between the engagement and the wedding. On the day of the wedding, people began to crowd the bride's house from early morning. Everything was in a turmoil. Elaborate preparations were being made. A ram was slain. Pilaf was being cooked in the yard. All kinds of vegetables and fruits were being piled up—raddishes, cucumbers, scallions, egg-plants, apricots, pistachio nuts, and melons and grapes. During all that time Khoziat sat in the *ichkari,* nervous, worried, but also a little glad that she was the cause of all this hubbub.

Soon Khoziat's mother came in and said that the mullah had arrived. She then assisted Khoziat with the *paranja,* and led her close to the door. On the other side of the shut door the mullah began to chant his prayers. Then he cried out in a loud voice, so Khoziat might hear on her side of the door: "Khoziat, do you consent to take this man as your husband?" He repeated the question three times. Khoziat did not know what to say, until prompted by her mother: "Hai" (yes).

After the ceremony, Khoziat's mother and some other women spread many rugs and quilts on the floor of the

ichkari. The great moment was approaching. Khoziat was to meet her husband for the first time. While she and her friends, all in *paranjas,* were huddled in a corner of the room, two young fellows, in bright turbans, brought in the bridegroom. A robe was thrown over his head. His escorts helped him sit down on the quilt and retired in silence. Khoziat's mother, aunts, and neighbors then surrounded her and, leading her over to the bridegroom, seated her next to him. Then everybody began to withdraw from the room. Khoziat's girl friends were sobbing: "You are leaving us. Don't forget us!"

They sat near each other, their faces covered, scarcely daring to move, petrified with fear and embarrassment. Khoziat could hear the gurgling of the stream outside and the rustling of the poplars. Her husband moved a little closer to her. She heard his heart beat. Finally he removed her *paranja,* and uncovered his own face. Khoziat did not dare raise her eyes. After a while, she glanced at him furtively. He was pleasing to look at. She felt a great gladness in her heart. Then their eyes met. He smiled at her and to reassure her he put a cushion under his head and shut his eyes. Khoziat was fortunate—he was kind and delicate. She too shut her eyes. They slept like brother and sister. The oil lamp burned all night.

Khoziat and Khadza lived together for about six months. Then Khadza left for Tashkent to work on a cotton plantation. He died soon after. Khadza's death was a terrible blow to Khoziat, for she had come to love Khadza and appreciate his gentleness. She then returned to her parents.

Echoes of the revolution finally reached Khoziat's village. There were rumors of fights and battles in the surrounding hills. Then a band of counter-revolutionary guerillas appeared. The village was terrorized. Markulanov and many other workers were killed. It was whispered that the bandits had sent out agents to look for pretty women. Khoziat's uncle heard it in the *chai-khana* (tea room) and he hurried to Khoziat's house that night and he brought his daughter with him and insisted that the girls must be hidden. Khoziat

and her cousin dressed up like old women, padded their backs with heaps of cotton, and, accompanied by Khoziat's mother, they fled that night to Kokand.

The refugees walked two days and two nights before they reached their destination. In Kokand they had neither relatives nor acquaintances, but it was a big city and they felt safer there. Khoziat's mother then decided to hide the girls in the household of the famous local *ishan* Rokharatub, who consented to take them in as servants. Striking his long, carefully combed beard and rolling his clever little eyes to heaven, the *ishan* said: "The flesh is ours, the bone is yours." By which he mant to say: "While they live, they work for me; if they die, they belong to you."

The *ishan's* household was a busy place. Many *miurids* (followers of an *ishan*) came to visit the holy man, bringing all kinds of gifts in meats, fruits, vegetables, and so on. Every night the ishan, surrounded by his *miurids,* sat on a mountain of quilts, ate fat *pilaf,* and recited the *Koran.* For him and his fanatical *miurids* every night was a feast night. But for the women in the household it was endless drudgery—cooking, and baking, and cleaning, and washing dishes from early morning till late at night. The girls received no pay; they weren't even given any clothes. They ate only the leftovers, and were chased and hounded by the *ishan's* two senior wives. Every night Khoziat and her cousin would shed furtive tears on their pillows.

After a few months, the *ishan* gave Khoziat's pretty cousin to one of his old *miurids,* Hokim Saidov, who had only one wife. The girl was afraid to refuse, though she hated the sight of Saidov. A few months later, Khoziat's uncle came and brought her regards from her mother. His daughter whom he also visited implored him to take her away from Saidov. But the uncle said it was bad this way and it was bad the other way. But he thought that Saidov was the lesser of the two evils, and he said that he couldn't take his daughter back before it was all over with the Basmach bandits.

Vague rumors would sometimes penetrate the walls of

the *ichkari;* Khoziat heard the old women curse the infidels, the Russians, the "Bolshevois." One day there was a great commotion in the *ichkari;* some one brought the news that he had seen a whole group of young Moslem women strutting brazenly through the street with their faces uncovered, like shameless harlots. The only one who did not appear to be outraged was the *ishan's* youngest wife, a pale little creature not much older than Khoziat. She, poor thing, had had a sad life, with the older women always jealous of her, and always picking on her, and gossiping about her. She was wasting away very fast, coughing up blood all the time. Maybe she was dreaming of a happier life of freedom, when she heard all those rumors that came from the outside world. That day she became so excited that she coughed more than ever, and had to be put to bed. The *ishan* had a consultation with a *tabib* (healer), and they decided that the best cure in such cases was a broth made of green frogs, which was to be given to the patient secretly for seven days in succession.

One of the old woman servants and Khoziat were then sent out to catch frogs. Taking a bag and iron pincers, they went to a distant pond in which green frogs were said to be plentiful. They had caught only a couple of them; so on the following day Khoziat went out by herself to hunt for frogs. As she approached Soviet Street, she saw something extraordinary happen. The street teemed with people. Red banners, and streamers, and placards gleamed and fluttered in the hot sun. A throng of women, mostly young, though there were a few middle-aged and even old ones, many with faces uncovered, were parading along the street. There was a brass band playing unfamiliar music. The young people were singing strange songs. Occasionally, one would hear the voices of youngsters: "Down with the *paranja!* Long live the free women of Central Asia! Down with the beys and mullahs! Long live the Soviet Government!"

This was new and fascinating. Poor Khoziat forgot all about the *ishan's* pallid wife and the green frogs, and, in a trance, followed the crowd. She watched the parading

girls. They looked so free and gay and proud, and she longed to be with them, to be like them, to sing their songs, to hold their banners.

Then the women marched into a spacious courtyard, with many trees and rugs and teapots. The paraders arranged themselves in a huge circle. They sat under the shady trees, and drank *kok-choi* (green tea), and ate apples, and listened to speeches. The girls called out to the women standing in the throngs of onlookers to remove their *paranjas* and to join in the feast. Khoziat did not dare to remove her *paranja.* "I live with an *ishan,*" she thought. "If he ever learns about it, he'll kill me." But she did sidle up to the girls, and timidly sat down on the edge of the rug. The girl next to her handed her an apple, and called her *rafik* (comrade). Khoziat was happy.

She listened to the speeches. Most of what was said she did not understand. What she did finally grasp was that this was Woman's Day, a day to celebrate woman's freedom. And she believed the speakers, for their eyes looked honest.

Then a middle-aged woman, with ample bosom and mild eyes, got up to speak. "Ibrahimova," whispered the crowd, "the director of the Woman's Department." She spoke as a mother would speak to her children, quietly, gently, simply —so that everyone could understand. She wasn't a smooth speaker. She often stopped, and smiled a little guiltily, fumbling for the proper word. She spoke of the sorrows of the woman's life. Of ignorance, and darkness. Of how children died by the thousands because the mothers didn't know how to take care of them. She spoke of the humiliation of wearing a *paranja.* . . .

When Ibrahimova finished, Khoziat felt drawn to her, like a mother. To her she could tell everything, of the terrible life at the *ishan's* and of her fear to go home. She sought out Ibrahimova in the crowd and anxiously touched her arm. She said only a few words and the older woman understood everything. "You have no one in Kokand? You are a widow? You live at the *ishan's?* Don't worry, my little woman, don't tremble so. We'll take you to our girls'

dormitory. We'll take care of you. We'll teach you; we'll train you; we'll make something of you."

Khoziat cried with happiness when she entered the girls' home on Karl Marx Street. She was taken into a nice, clean bathroom and shown how to use it. She was given clean underwear, European clothes, bed, quilt—everything.

On the very next day, Khoziat's teacher gave her the first lesson. Things came easy to her. In a couple of weeks, she knew how to read and write. She soon started arithmetic and elementary politgramota (civics). The girls used to have long talks with their teacher. She was a very intelligent woman, and one of the first woman Communists in Central Asia. Her name was Makhi Djamal Seifutdinova. She had seen a great deal in her life. She had been a woman's delegate in Samarkand and in Tashkent. And she had been a member of the first delegation to the First Congress of Eastern Women in Moscow. She often spoke of the life in the various big cities she had visited, and she very often spoke of Lenin. It was through Seifutdinova's conversations that the girls came to know and love Lenin. She described how well they had been received in Moscow, how Lenin and his wife, Krupskaya, came to visit them. On the sight of Lenin, one of the Uzbek women fell on his shoulder and began to cry, and she couldn't stop until they gave her some drops. Then Lenin conversed with the women, and told them what the Soviet Government was trying to do for them. Then Alexandra Kollontai spoke to them. Then they were taken to museums, and theaters, and factories. They stayed in Moscow twelve days.

Khoziat lived in the dormitory for nine months, and was very successful in her studies. She got encouragement on all sides. Among her teachers there was a young man by the name of Feizula. He was also the superintendent of the dormitory. He took a special interest in Khoziat and helped her a great deal. Once she had to fill out a questionnaire; and in helping her fill in the answers, Feizula learned much about her former life.

"Does your mother know about you, where you are?" he asked Khoziat. "Don't you think you are a little unkind to your mother? From what you tell me, she is a very good and kind woman. Don't you think we better notify her as to your whereabouts?"

Khoziat felt ashamed before Feizula for being so callous, but she said that she was afraid her mother and her uncle might take her away from the school, back to the village.

Still, Feizula, without consulting Khoziat, did write a letter to her mother. One afternoon—she was monitor that day—Khoziat was busy cleaning up one of the rooms. Suddenly she saw a veiled woman, followed by a little boy, crossing the threshold. "Are there no men around?" the woman asked in a low voice. "Not a soul, my good woman," replied Khoziat gayly. The woman uncovered her face. It was Khoziat's mother! And the little boy was her youngest brother. For the first few moments, both her mother and little brother were so stunned by Khoziat's European outfit and bobbed hair that they couldn't utter a sound. It wasn't Khoziat. At any rate, it was not their Khoziat. She was a stranger. She looked like an infidel. And they both burst into tears. It was only after Khoziat rushed to them, and embraced them, and kissed them, and made them feel at home and welcome, that they became a little composed. Gradually, they got used to her alien appearance. It was their Khoziat, after all, whom every one in the village thought dead!

What happened was this: After Khoziat had vanished from the *ishan's* house, she had been searched for by her master's servants all over Kokand. When no traces could be found of her, the *ishan* called in a fortune-teller who, after mumbling all kinds of strange words and pronouncing many queer prayers and invocations while casting little balls of cotton into a bowl of water, finally solved the mystery. "The light has gone out of Khoziat," she finally muttered. "A big man, a *kaffir*, a Bolshevoi abducted her while she was returning from the pond carrying the green frogs. He abducted her, then killed her, then threw her into the water."

Khoziat laughed at her mother and her fears, and called the *mullah* an old fool, and told her mother very definitely that she had not the least intention of going back to the village. Her mother was hurt, and Khoziat had to explain. She talked to her, and tried to convert her to a more modern point of view. She told her of Ibrahimova and Seifutdinova. She tried to explain to her the disgrace of wearing a *paranja*. She presented to her all the arguments that she had learned in favor of woman's emancipation. But the mother shook her head sadly, and told Khoziat that she wasn't convinced, that the Tadjiks had lived that way for centuries, and that she saw no good in breaking up everything, in destroying everything. "I can't go back to the village without you," she kept on saying. "Ah, Khoziat, Khoziat, what have you done to me and our family? You have disgraced us in the eyes of every good Moslem. Everybody will be pointing at me. I won't be able to look anybody straight in the eyes. If, Allah beware, I am in trouble, no one will help me. Ah, Khoziat, Khoziat . . ." Still, her resistance was a little broken. There was even a glimmer of pride in her eyes when Khoziat displayed her ability to read and write and make long additions and subtractions.

Later, the girls came in, and Feizula, and Seifutdinova, and were all very courteous and gentle with the mother. As to her, while she never said a thing to Khoziat, seeing all those nice people with whom her daughter was associated made her feel a little reassured.

When she was bidding farewell to Khoziat, she said, "Ah, my little daughter, if you only knew how I'm afraid to face our relatives and neighbors. I have learned much while I have stayed with you here, and I have thought that perhaps you young people are right after all. I don't know. But I am an old woman, Khoziat, and I am sorry I wasn't dead before all these new things have come to destroy the old life."

That was the last Khoziat saw of her mother. The old woman died soon afterward—a good, devoted, silent and obedient Moslem woman. Soon afterward Khoziat married

Her husband, who was a member of the Young Communist League, was transferred from Kokand to Tashkent, to study in the University. Khoziat went with him, to study in the Workers' Faculty. Here an altogether new life began for her. From now on her life became bound up with the Revolution.

Tact and Revolution

Long before Khoziat came to Tashkent, the Communist Party there had done a huge amount of work with the native women. The nature of this work is best given in the following statement of F. Marchenko, one of the leaders of the Woman's Department in Tashkent:

Our Department was organized on November 12, 1919, when the Regional Committee of the Communist Party adopted a resolution calling for the formation of special women's departments in all the Party committees in Central Asia. The purpose of these departments was preliminary education, agitation, and organization among the native women. However, the work at first moved along rather slowly.

The European, the Russian, women, the working women and the wives of working men in Tashkent did begin to stir, to show signs of life—now a meeting, now a lecture, here and there a political circle. But the native Uzbek and Tadjik women were neither seen nor heard.

Many a time Dvorkina and myself, seeing how well the work was progressing in the new, the European, section of the city, among the Russians, would say to ourselves: "This is not the main thing, the old city is still untouched."

The trouble was, we did not know the language. Another trouble, there were no Moslem women in the ranks of our Party. And it was only later that Dvorkina fortunately happened to come across Usupova, a Tartar woman. The latter had had a lot of trouble in her married life, and spoke

bitterly of the lot of the Eastern women. She seemed to us very promising, but we did not know at the beginning where to use her. She explained to us the local customs, the traditions; she also served as our tongue. We then decided to try first to draw in the Moslem women of the intelligentsia. We called two meetings. Quite a number came, but they all seemed to be half asleep. We made efforts to have elections for a special Moslem Women's Bureau, also to elect some for forming contacts with other Moslem women. But as soon as the meeting was adjourned, there was no bureau, and no one who was willing to do the necessary work. This was quite natural, since the crowd was rather well-to-do, without a touch of social consciousness, and certainly without any disposition to take part in great events.

All other pother came to nothing. We succeeded only in getting hold of a few Moslem, chiefly Tartar, women—Khusanbaieva, Fatikha, Redkina, Karimova, etc.

We failed badly with the intelligentsia. We therefore decided to begin from the other end, to begin with the poorest class.

Even before we arrived at Tashkent, there had been in the old city artels of women weavers. Usually, these women weavers were given the cheapest sort of cotton to work on. The wages were not paid regularly. And the prices they received were very low. Of course it might be better to sell their products at the bazaar; but, first, this was even less certain; and, second, one needed funds for the initial investment in cotton, spindles, etc. And so, these Moslem women, meek, ragged, would come, hand in their week's work, receive their miserable few kopecks, and uncomplainingly go home to starve some more. Many of these women had whole families to support. Either the husband was sick, or there was no husband at all. Such women, heads of families, are more independent, and tend to become more emancipated than the helpless women of the intelligentsia.

It was with this material that we began our work. We entered into an agreement with the Department of Home Crafts. We sent our representative to watch that our

women got better cotton to work with; we won a higher price for the piece workers, etc.

We then called a meeting of the women working in the artels. There was no trouble to get them to come. The place was like a bee-hive. Noise. Complaints. In the new city, milk is handed out for babies free of charge. No such thing in the old city. In the new city, a new-born babe gets some clothes. No such thing in the old city. In the new city, they occasionally get a ration. No such thing in the old city. And so it was from the material side that we approached the native woman, and she, of course, gladly responded.

But what to do with the traditions that pressed like a yoke on the Moslem woman? We had to grope along. On the one hand we were advised not to wake the native woman, for it might complicate the political situation; on the other, we were being urged by some bold souls to proclaim the slogan, "Down with the *paranja!*" Such "Down-with" radicals were unhesitatingly sat upon; age-old traditions cannot be knocked out by a straight-from-the-shoulder blow. Let, in the meanwhile, the Moslem woman wear her *paranja*—that is nothing. What we have to do is to help her economically, to put her on her feet, to give her a chance to earn a livelihood. And perhaps she will herself begin to do things. To raise the economic and cultural level of the native woman, to help the Soviet government to find a way of doing it—these were the first steps. And here Dvorkina did everything possible. Not even one of the native women with whom we worked removed her *paranja;* though many of them were at congresses and in Soviets, both as members and delegates.

It was in this careful manner that, together with our work in the artels, we began to do a little cultural work—little plays and concerts preceded by meetings. We began to take our Moslem women to the new city—to the Lunacharsky House. These affairs attracted not only the poor women we had drawn into our ranks. Funny things would happen occasionally. Imagine a concert-meeting in the Lunacharsky House. The speakers and the performers are in the back

of the stage awaiting their turn. At the door stands our guard. Men are not admitted. While all around the house there are the Moslem husbands, watching whether it is really true that only women are allowed to the concert. And the women in the hall feel perfectly at home. Some are listening in a reclined position; some help the performer with her song. The kids, too, are here. Altogether, the thing is quite informal and gay. To these affairs we succeeded in attracting wives of most jealous and conservative husbands.

I recall only once that an unpleasant incident took place. A few Hindu comrades who were on their way to Moscow, to the Comintern, expressed a desire to bring their greetings from revolutionary India to the new comrades—the Moslem women of Central Asia. We should have warned the women to pull down their *paranjas* before we brought in the guests. But our guard failed us. The tall, graceful, handsome Hindus, about thirteen of them, solemnly, slowly, one after another marched into the hall just as the women were at the height of informality. A cry of horror pierced the hall. The women dashed for safety. Many literally fell to the floor in an attempt to hide their faces. The thoroughly embarrassed and nonplussed guests were made to occupy the first rows and were instructed not to turn their heads. They must have felt terribly foolish to sit motionless for such a long time. They begged to be excused. Of course, their greeting to the audience of "coffins with black lids" had lost a great deal of its fervor.

Stories about our parties, our appeals, and explanations spread throughout the city, and penetrated far into rural districts. More and more women began to come to our Department—now it was a woman beaten by her husband, now it was a youngster forced into marriage. Weeping, at times bleeding, came old women, middle-aged mothers, little girls; often on their knees, grasping at our skirts, seizing our hands, imploring for help. Willy-nilly we had to meddle in the intimate lives of these people. We tried to be cautious, tactful, not to arouse any resentment. Not infrequently, we had couples come. The husband, serious, morose, in one corner of the office, the wife, sobbing, in another; both demanding justice. We began to appear before the native judges, the *casii,* trying to combat their casuistry and their antiquated laws. And, I repeat, we never got into serious trouble with the native men.

The work of our Department was growing, its influence spreading. Between the years 1919 and 1922 scores of conferences and congresses were held. In 1920, the first trip of Central Asian women to Moscow took place.

This news caused a considerable sensation among the natives. Our message of woman's emancipation was penetrating to the villages. Women's clubs and schools were beginning to be opened in various sections of the country. The Central Executive Committee of Turkestan now felt the time ripe for making polygamy, forced marriages, and marriages of minors criminal offenses. Our labor was bearing fruit.

Husbands and Schools

To return to Khoziat and Feizula. Tashkent, where the newlyweds went to live, was the center of European culture in Central Asia. It had a big European population (in the new city) with several modern educational institutions. It had a large and strongly organized working class, mainly Russian railway workers. As the capital of Turkestan, it was the first city in this part of the world to establish the Soviet regime, and was now the general headquarters of the Communist Party in Central Asia. From Tashkent as a center, the Bolsheviki had sent the Soviet Armies to wage their victorious battles against the counter-revolutionary government of Kokand and against the tyrannical government of the Bokhara Emir. When Khoziat came there in 1922, Tashkent was already in possession of a rich revolutionary tradition: the proper atmosphere for an eager convert. What was most important as far as Khoziat's personal development was concerned was the fact that Tashkent was

at the heart of the woman's movement in Central Asia. However, just when she came to Tashkent and was drawn into the work, the Woman's Department was in a rather bad way. The main reason was, of course, the institution of the New Economic Policy. As a result of the Nep, the Woman's Department had to make fundamental readjustments in its method of work. Previously, students were being paid during their part-time apprenticeship in the schools, offices, and factories. The Nep, by abolishing this privilege, made the task of attracting Uzbek and Tadjik women students much more difficult. Then, again, with the establishment of the Nep, the state ceased to subsidize the artels. And without this support, the rather weak and inefficient women's artels, where the efforts of the Woman's Department were mainly concentrated, began to disintegrate.

On the other hand, as the Party was gaining in members and power, its attack on the old grew bolder and more determined. And one must bear in mind that not everywhere were the representatives of the Woman's Department as diplomatic and tactful as were Marchenko and Dvorkina. In many places the enthusiasts were forcing the issue, removing the *paranjas,* and losing their heads in the process. This naturally brought a sharp reaction. Resistance, at first passive and peaceful, began to assume more ominous forms. In Auliae-Ata, where Khoziat had been commandeered in 1924 to organize a woman's department, the mullahs lodged the following complaint against her before the Revolutionary Committee: "A certain woman in a red dress and a little cap seduces and corrupts our wives. We know that this is not a woman, but a man in disguise. We request that he be arrested in conformity with the laws of the sheriat. If this is not done, we'll take the law into our own hands." To forestall violence, the Committee had to make a pretense at arresting Khoziat. She was then urged by the authorities to stop all propaganda which might result in serious trouble.

Hers was not by any means a unique case. Tadjik and Uzbek Communists were seized, beaten and forced to swear

that they would make their wives wear the *paranja;* they were summoned to the mosque and were made to renounce their struggles against religion and custom. They and their kin were threatened with arson, ruin, ostracism. The fighters for the new life were being driven out of their homes and out of settlements. Parents of married women were taking them away from their Bolshevik husbands. Violence and terror spread throughout the land. Women who wished to study, who removed their *paranjas,* were beaten, raped, murdered. Whole villages rose in brutal frenzy against them. Even as late as the years 1927 and 1928, on the eve of Woman's Day, on the seventh of March, several score of unveiled women were slain. From March to November, 1928, 250 unveiled women were slain in Uzbekistan alone.

Such cases can be recounted by the hundreds. The point is that the embattled forces of reaction were putting up a stiff fight. To carry on its work at all, the Woman's Department had to compromise a great deal. It is no-exaggeration to say that the Soviet decrees of 1921 pertaining to marital relations were in many places simply not being enforced. It would have been suicidal to try to enforce them. In domestic relations cases the administration of justice was still largely in the hands of the beys and *casii.* The Communists had to be extremely cautious. They had to neutralize the provocative propaganda of the beys and the mullahs.

This does not mean that the Department had suspended its work. By the end of the fifth year, 35 per cent of the best workers of the Department were Uzbek and Tadjik women. The Department was winning the sympathies and often the cooperation of the poorest sections of the population. There were many amusing and curious cases. One afternoon a middle-aged Kirghiz peasant shambled into Khoziat's office and submitted a carefully written request. The request read something like this:

"I, being a poor peasant, have not the means to pay *kalym* and get a wife. I, therefore, apply for your cooperation in that if you have some unmarried Kirghiz woman or one

that has run away from her husband, I should be glad to marry her."

Khoziat had much trouble trying to get into his head that the Woman's Department was not engaged in supplying wives, arranging marriages, and that it did not keep in reserve a stock of old maids and runaway wives. He left the office terribly disappointed.

Invariably, male support of the work of Khoziat's department came from the poorest workers and peasants who could not afford to pay *kalym,* and who were therefore in favor of abolishing it. These people, too, were naturally in favor of doing away with polygamy. First, being poor, they had no hope of ever having more than one wife, however desirable that might be. Second, they realized that with the disappearance of polygamy, many more women would be available for the poor bachelors.

The usefulness of the legal division of the Woman's Department has been attested to by countless men and women of the poorer classes who came in contact with it. It had pushed through the Commission of Justice a statute granting a variety of privileges to women who had had occasion to resort to the courts. For instance, on the Department's recommendation, domestic relations cases involving property were given first place on the court calendars. The state provided the women with legal counsel free of charge.

But legal aid and promulgating and popularizing laws that tended to emancipate the native women constituted only one phase of Khoziat's work. Of no small moment was her work in placing the Uzbek, Tadjik, Turcoman, and Kirghiz women into the Soviet apparatus, in working for their election into local or district Soviets and executive committees, in getting them jobs in the various industrial, commercial, and educational organs of the State, in drawing them into the Party, the Young Communist League, the Pioneer organization, in stimulating their active interest in the cooperative movement, in luring them into the Department's various voluntary social welfare and national defense

groups. With the other officers in the Department, Khoziat supervised the conditions under which the women worked, tried to take care of the unemployed women, and cooperated with the unemployment bureaus in placing them in jobs. Mainly, however, Khoziat's attention was focused on the cultural and educational fronts—schools, clubs, nurseries, hygiene, etc.

That was what the Woman's Department did for Khoziat. Precisely the same thing was being done for thousands of women throughout Central Asia. From the very outset, the Department began to agitate for women's schools, an idea unheard of in the old days! Why should a girl be taught to read and write, when even the male population was 95 per cent illiterate, the remaining 5 per cent comprising chiefly the clericals and their children!

A fair idea of the type of girl student the Department attracted, may be obtained from some of the cases told by Khoziat. First, the case of Zeinof Kariheva. When she was seven years old, Zeinof had been sold by her brother to a rich old bey. The transaction had taken place during the famine in Fergana, and the price the brother received was 18 poods of *moto* and a cow. Zeinof's life with the old bey was perpetual misery. Abused by her husband, persecuted by the two senior wives and their grown-up children, the little girl behaved like a wildcat. Once, when particularly infuriated, she jumped at the husband's youngest son, Akhmed, and buried her nails in his face. The spoiled youngster let out one piercing, savage yell. The old bey then decided to teach Zeinof a lesson. He beat her so long and so methodically, that the child-wife lay unconscious for days. When she came to, Zeinof ran away from the house. She hid in the orchard for three days, until, driven by hunger, she made her way into the village. By sheer luck she ran into a group of Young Communists who listened to her story, collected some money among themselves, and sent her on to Khoziat's department. Khoziat had never seen anything quite so pitiful as this child when she was brought into the office. Blood-stained, bruised, shabby, trembling with

anxiety and fear, she kept on crying: "I won't go back to my husband; his children beat me; my husband beats me when I don't look happy. . . . I won't go away from here." This was in 1924. Zeinof is now in her third year at the Tashkent University.

There was Abdunabaiva, who placed her children in nurseries and came to study. There was Kirghizbaiva, who had been given into marriage at the age of 14, but who had left her husband and came to the school. Kirghizbaiva had been sold in 1923 to an old husband. The first time she escaped, she was caught, beaten by her husband and his kin and severely wounded with a knife. After she recovered, she escaped a second time and came to Khoziat begging to be allowed to study. Mukhamed Alieva Khoirakhan has escaped from her husband who attempted to kill her, inflicting on her twelve heavy wounds with his pocket knife. She was still bleeding when she stumbled into Khoziat's office and collapsed. Alieva is now a member of the Party, and is being trained in the Party school for the job of Communist organizer.

Another important phase of the cultural work of Khoziat's Department was the opening of women's clubs; the main purpose being to draw the woman out of her seclusion. When Khoziat came to Tashkent, the first woman's club in Central Asia had already been organized there. It started with only fifteen Uzbek women. Within a couple of years the club boasted a membership of 426. It grew by leaps and bounds. Branches were opened throughout the cities and the villages. There are scores of such clubs now. Men are not allowed to enter the club rooms. This makes it easier to get the women in. At the beginning the women shunned the clubs, for fear that they might be forced to remove their *paranjas*. In its club propaganda, therefore, Khoziat's Department always stressed the point that membership was not contingent on unveiling. To make sure that the women would be tempted to come to the clubs, practical inducements were offered. For instance, the Tashkent club organized under its auspices a sewing artel which gave employment

to a considerable number of women members. It established a medical service. Women members as well as non-members are encouraged to come and consult the Department's physicians. The women are taught how to take care of their infants. By means of talks, exhibits, posters, etc., they are introduced to the elementary principles of hygiene. They are given medicine free of charge. Now it is interesting to note that, while going to the club does not require unveiling, unveiling is the inevitable consequence of frequent visits to the club.

Owing to the agitation and pressure of the Woman's Department, Tashkent had in 1924 sixteen specialized medical schools: a school for trained midwives, another school for trained nurses, a school for doctor's assistants, a school for teaching hygiene, for dental hygienists, a pharmacy school, etc. While at the beginning the majority of students in these schools were Russians, the number of native women has grown enormously. The services these schools are rendering are of incalculable value.

A Transition Generation

It was midnight, but Khoziat was not even half-through with her story. By that time, most of us were too tired to ask questions, and one of the group even began to snore—true, quite unobtrusively and delicately, with sudden little starts, and brief pauses, but sufficiently pointedly to make Khoziat a bit self-conscious.

"I had intended to tell you of my work in Tashkent; it turned out, however, that I have told little about myself and a whole lot about the Woman's Department," she said apologetically. "This can be explained by two equally important reasons. The first is—I am a Communist; and this means that like all Communists, I mean real Communists, I am so absorbed in my work and so completely identified with it that when I speak of my work I actually speak of myself. My individual life, my personal emotions, and

struggles, and sufferings are relatively of little importance and probably of less interest. So this is one reason. The other is that my recent personal life has been a rather painful one, and I naturally am reluctant to dwell on it. Still, since it throws some light on the psychological difficulties we emancipated women are meeting on our path, I will tell you a bit about it. You will recall I was a young, pretty, innocent, and eager creature when I came with Feizula to Tashkent. I had married Feizula, not because I was attracted to him, but because he was kind to me and my mother, and also because marrying him meant remaining in Kokand, meant continuing my studies, meant freedom. When we came to Tashkent, Feizula entered the University, while I divided my time between the Workers' Faculty and the Woman's Department. I jumped into the hurly-burly of Tashkent life, meeting all kinds of men, working together or under the leadership of some of the most devoted and brilliant comrades in our Party.

"How did the comrades behave toward me?

"Before I answer this, let me give you the psychological setting, which, incidentally, I failed to understand at the beginning, a failure which has cost me no end of needless pain and suffering. Take first our men. The ancient Moslem attitude toward woman, the feeling instilled in every one since childhood that a woman who uncovers her face in the presence of strange men is a harlot, has so conditioned man's psychology in Central Asia as to make it impossible for him to react to an unveiled native woman in a manner that you Europeans would consider normal. This is true of all our men. Even our best, most sincere, intellectually most emancipated, and principled Communists reveal occasionally this psychological aberration. Even they betray at times the inability to suppress a reaction which in its immediacy is tantamount to a conditioned reflex; even they, although unconsciously, tend to assume that peculiar freedom of manner which men allow themselves in the presence of women of 'questionable character.' As a result we have a vicious psychological circle. It is generally the adventurous,

daring, and naturally enough, rather good-looking woman who flings aside her *paranja*. As a reaction to her previous enforced meekness, she now tends to become more self-assertive and unrestrained than is good for her. In her relations with the opposite sex she is helpless. Not having been trained since childhood to meet men, she has not built up the particular defenses which a woman needs if she is to meet men freely, on an equal basis. In her work she mingles among men without being emotionally prepared to ward off their equivocal remarks and persistent advances. Whenever she is in a mixed group, the atmosphere becomes charged—passion, jealousy, fear—much more so than you probably find among European men and women. The woman here needs a good deal of discipline and balance, particularly when her habitual defenses have been surrendered and no new ones have as yet been erected.

"In my own case this resulted in tragedy. Meeting men was to me a novel and thrilling experience. A compliment or an embrace was a grand experience. I lost my head. Being a good Communist, Feizula tried to overlook it. But after all, he *was* a Central Asian. For him to let his wife go out unveiled was a tremendous step forward. It was absurd to expect of him the tolerance which I now know is rare even among European men. He suffered terribly. He made jealous scenes. He even struck me on several occasions. He would then cry, and beg me not to bring it up before the Party nucleus. We argued, and discussed, and quarreled. Both young and inexperienced, this new freedom was too much for us. Later, when I began to understand the true nature of most of the compliments and the advances, I suffered doubly. I used to be hurt and insulted. Are these comrades? Are these Communists? I began to lose respect, I began to detest some of the best and most heroic fighters in our ranks. 'They are no better than the Basmachi,' I often thought in my disgust. 'They are worse, because they have pretensions'. In the meanwhile, Feizula and I were becoming more and more estranged. You see, we were the victims of a transition period. In the tortures of our souls, in the fires

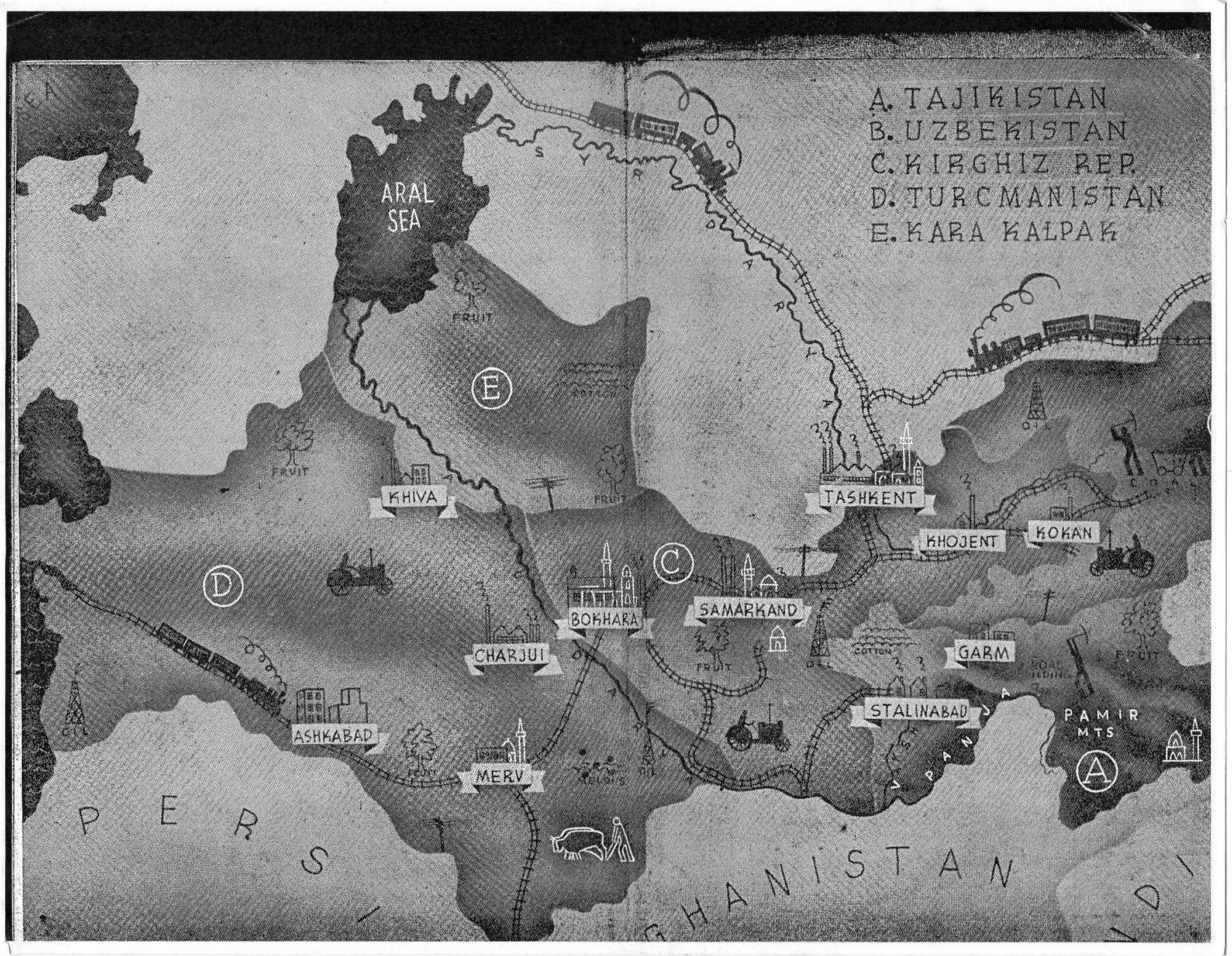
of our passions a new morality was beginning to be molded. The process is not over yet. Very many are still doomed to burn their wings in their heedless dash for freedom. However, these new ones have people like me and Feizula, people who have gone through the fire, to turn to for guidance and consolation.

"Often the first woman in a village to unveil determines the whole course of woman's emancipation in that locality. If she is too weak, she compromises the whole idea of unveiling. For in the eyes of the village, she is a loose woman, a slut. She compromises, not only the idea of woman's emancipation, but also every other social or economic or educational reform sponsored by the Communists. She plays into the hands of the counter-revolutionary elements who generalize her individual failing into an inevitable consequence of yielding to Bolshevik influence. 'The Bolsheviki are turning our women into harlots,' the enemies whisper. Thus hasty unveilings work at times irreparable harm to our cause. Small wonder we have learned to watch our step. Unless we are absolutely sure that the woman has enough character and intelligence to assume the responsibilities of a pioneer, we actually go to the length of discouraging her. We try to put a brake on impetuous decisions. This is particularly so in localities where the number of unveiled women is still small. For we Bolsheviks, while intransigeant in our aims, are yet, when necessary, patient in pursuing them. We gamble only when we are fairly certain of our chances. And, as I have already emphasized, in dealing with cultural and psychological 'superstructures,' we often resort to Fabian tactics.

"By opening silk and textile factories, by opening cotton-ginneries, by paying more than a woman can possibly earn in her primitive home crafts, by organizing relatively good kitchens and nurseries and dispensaries and clubs in the factories, we lure the woman out of her seclusion, gradually but irretrievably. This may not be as romantic as you first imagined, but it is more certain. Four or five weeks in a factory do marvels for the woman. And the man's objections

and jealous fears subside, too, when he discovers that his wife's earnings add considerably to his family income. Also, by encouraging collectivization of agriculture, we enhance the process of woman's emancipation. In a collective farm each individual who works gets paid according to a specified norm. Equal work brings equal pay. The wife of a farmer in a collective knows exactly the extent of her contribution to the family purse; she can leave her husband and still be economically as secure as when she lived with him.

"It is on this base of changed economic and social relations that a new cultural life can be built, and with it a new psychology. We are a transition generation. Knee-deep in our feudal past, we are attempting to build our children's Socialist future. It is hard. Some lose strength and courage. But there are always others to take up the work. Despite the beys, the mullahs, the Basmachi, the plotters from abroad, Ibrahim Bek, the Revolution forges ahead, freeing all of us, men and women of Central Asia, from the memory of a past that seems too horrible to have ever been real."


A. TAJIKISTAN
B. UZBEKISTAN
C. KIRGHIZ REP.
D. TURCMANISTAN
E. KARA KALPAK
ARAL SEA
KHIVA
TASHKENT
KHOJENT
KOKAN
BOKHARA
SAMARKAND
CHARJUI
GARM
STALINABAD
ASHKABAD
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